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BOSTON CELTICS PRIDE



Volume 1, Issue 19
September 30, 1986

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VETERANS HIGHLIGHT ROOKIE CAMP

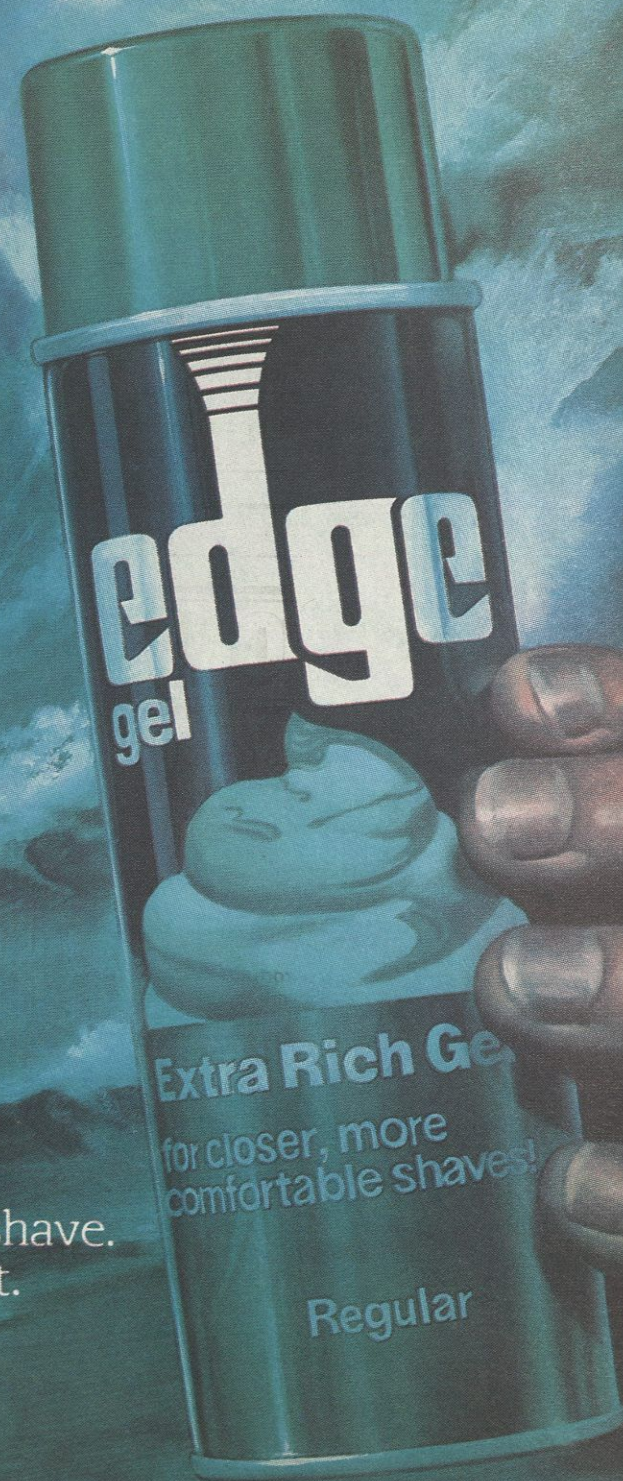
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BOSTON CELTICS PRIDE

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 19
SEPTEMBER 29, 1986

Cover . . .

David Thirdkill, Sam Vincent and Greg Kite all showed up for the Celtics' Rookie Camp at Brandeis in August.

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Elise Waterman and M.L. Carr, the M.S. "Champion of the Year."

M.L. Carr Named Champion Of The Year By Multiple Sclerosis Society

The Massachusetts Chapter of the Multiple Sclerosis Society has named M.L. Carr, Boston Celtic from 1979-1985, to receive the 11th annual "Champion of the Year" award. The announcement was made today at the Celtics rookie training camp in Waltham. The presentation of the award will be made at the "Dinner of Champions" on October 23, 1986 at the Sheraton Boston Hotel.

The "Dinner of Champions" is a fundraising event which generate contributions for national and local research to find a cure for Multiple Sclerosis (MS), and for support services to benefit victims of MS. Each year the event has grown in terms of excitement and money raised. Last year, Bobby Orr was honored at the dinner, which attracted 700 guests.

According to Elise Waterman, chairperson of the dinner, M.L. was selected this year because

"he's a champion on and off the court." She said M.L. is a high spirited, community oriented figure who symbolizes a true champion. M.L. has recently joined forces with the Bank of Boston in a high school program to fight drug abuse.

The October 23 dinner, which begins at 6:30 p.m., will feature a first time viewing of a music video, with the Celtics chanting the "M.L. Shuffle." A trip for two, donated by Swiss Air and Nesher Travel will be raffled. Numerous sports figures and media personalities will be in attendance to support the drive to find a cure for MS—a mysterious disease which strikes during early adulthood.

For more information or tickets to the "Dinner of Champions" call Claire Alemian, Conventures, 617/267-0055 or Elise Waterman, dinner chairperson at 617/965-0886.

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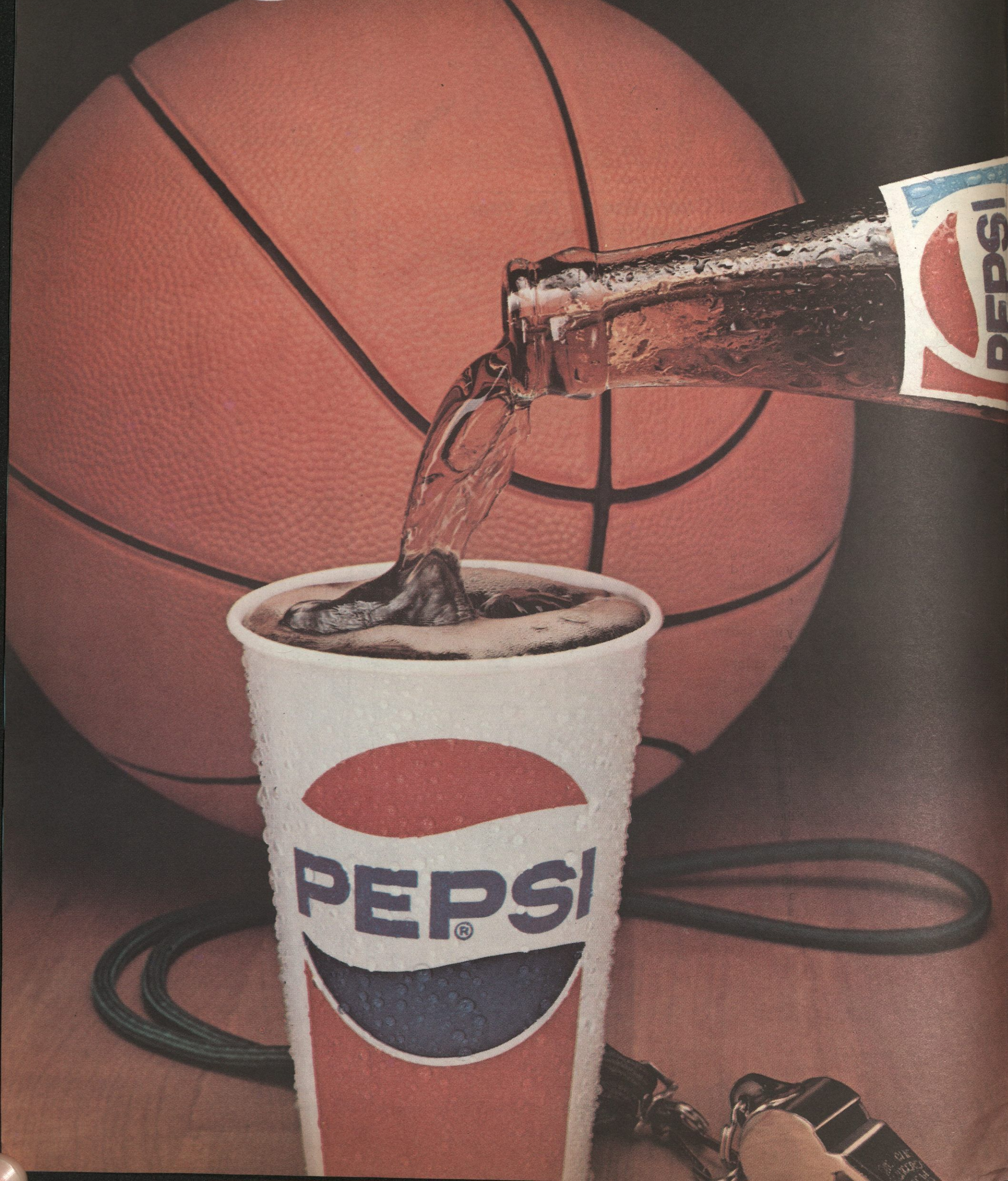
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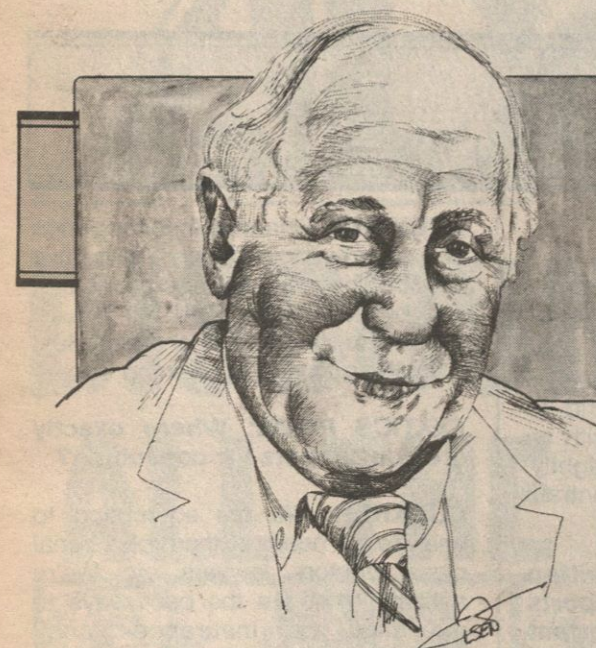
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FAST BREAK



BOSTON CELTICS PRIDE



Ask Red Auerbach

QUESTION: The Celtics had a long history of former players becoming head coaches in the NBA. Do you think that Larry Bird would consider being a coach after his playing career is over?

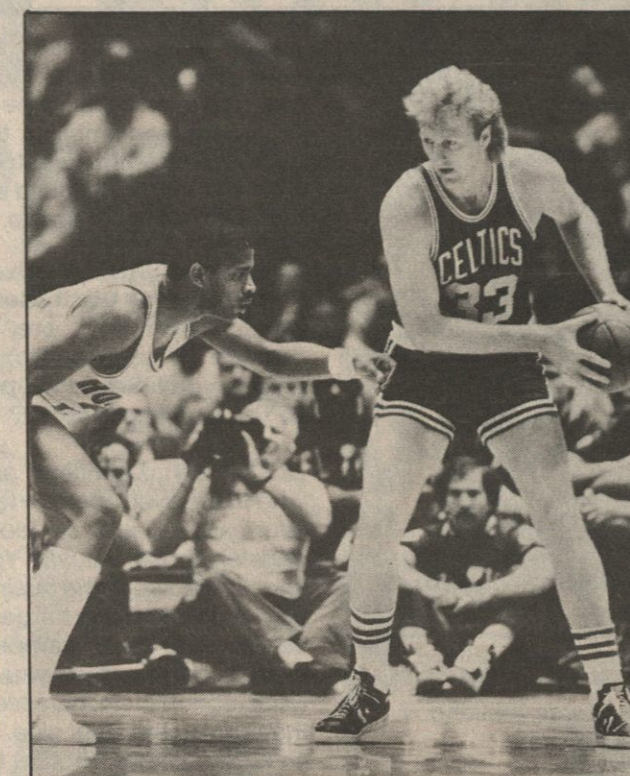
Matthew Thompson, St. Albans, W. Va.

RED'S ANSWER: There is no question in my mind that Larry Bird has all the necessary qualities to become a great basketball coach, either in the NBA or elsewhere. In fact, he once said—early in his career—that when he retired, he'd like to return to Indiana and become a high school coach. He obviously understands the game as well as anyone who has ever played, he understands athletes and their individual motivations, and he has a love of the game, all elements of good coaches. But, ultimately, it is up to Larry to decide what he wants to do when he retires; a person with everything he has going for him can do just about anything. Anyway, I don't like even thinking about Larry retiring, even though I know it has to happen sooner or later.

QUESTION: What was the very first year of the NBA? How was the NBA created?

Elizabeth Gouveia, Taunton, Ma.

RED'S ANSWER: The National Basketball Association was founded in 1946, but at its inception it was known as the Basketball Association of America. At that time, "basketball" meant college basketball; although pro teams and players existed, they had no real public following. On June 6th of that year (the second anniversary of D-Day), at a meeting at the Commodore Hotel in New York City, the league's founding fathers met to plan their project. The leaders of the group meeting that day were Walter Brown—who later became my boss, the first owner of the Celtics, Al Sutphin and Ned Irish. They agreed to form this new league, and named Maurice Podoloff President of it. When the season began in November, there were 11 teams in the BAA: the Boston Celtics, New York Knickerbockers, Providence Steamrollers, Philadelphia Warriors, Washington Capitols, Toronto Huskies, Chicago Stags, St. Louis Bombers, Cleveland Rebels, Detroit Falcons and Pittsburgh Ironmen. Of these teams, only three were to succeed. A young man named Auerbach, by the way, was the coach of the Washington team. In 1949, the BAA brought the survivors of another league, the National Basketball League, into the fold, creating a 17-team league that would become



Larry can be a great coach.

known as the National Basketball Association. One year after that, I joined the Celtics as head coach.

QUESTION: If two teams are tied at the end of the regular season, what method does the NBA use to determine who gets the playoff berth or homecourt advantage in the playoffs? Also, where can I get a copy of the NBA Rules book?

Edward M. Bielawa, Fall River, Ma.

RED'S ANSWER: Here's the tie-breaking procedure for when two teams are tied with the same record at the end of the regular season. The following things are considered, in order, to break the tie: 1) results of games against each other; 2) better winning percentage within own conference; 3) better winning percentage within own division, if teams are in same division; 4) better winning percentage against playoff opponents in own conference; 5) point differential in games against each other, and 6) better point differential between offense and defense. Got that? As for your second question, I'm sure you can get a copy of the NBA Rules Book by writing the NBA office (Olympic Tower, 645 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10022).

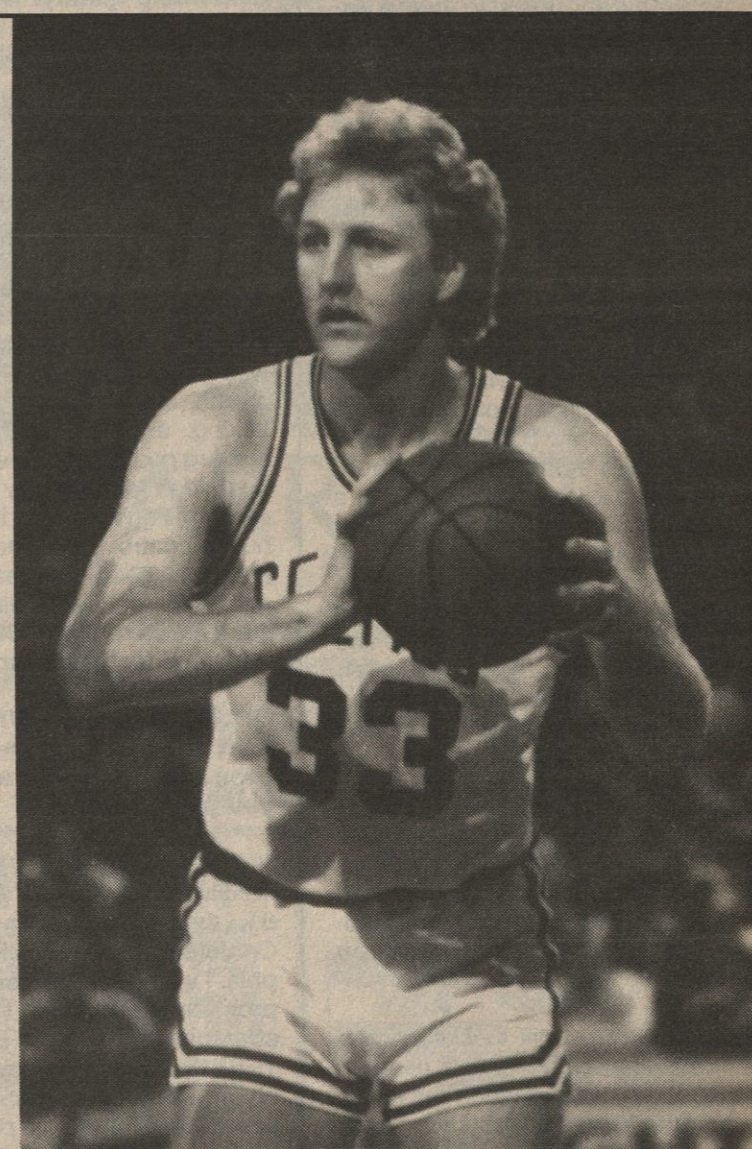
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Innerview

Quinn Buckner

Although Quinn Buckner's tenure in Boston was only three years, the character, style, and class the veteran guard demonstrated here made him a valuable player for the Celtics. Buckner arrived in Boston as a proven point guard from a winning program in Milwaukee, yet, for the benefit of the team, willingly accepted the role of reserve off the bench. He had nearly led the Bucks twice to the NBA Finals with extended minutes; forced to give up playing time, his conditioning suffered and his game regressed. Traded by the Celtics last summer for Jerry Sichting, Buckner was released by the Indiana Pacers in January.

CELTICS PRIDE: Was your departure from professional basketball hard to take?

BUCKNER: Actually, I haven't missed the game as much as I thought. Don't get me wrong, I loved the game and all the benefits which went along with it. But we're very busy and happy now.

CELTICS PRIDE: What were your immediate reactions to being released and what are you doing now?

BUCKNER: I was shocked at first because I was led to believe that Clint Richardson and myself were on the team to help ease the transition the team was making to youth. But things happen—the team started the season poorly and plans changed.

My family (wife Rhona and children Jason, Cory, and Lauren) and I originally moved back to Milwaukee, but we are in the process of returning to Indianapolis. I had considered working in the real estate business, but I am returning to my original idea of a post-playing career. We are working as consultants in businesses which utilize computers for business decisions. Our approach is to analyze the needs of the (small) business and its personnel, and hopefully determine how the computer can facilitate decision-making internally and outside the business.

CELTICS PRIDE: You played on what many consider to be the best NCAA "team"—the 1976 Indiana Hoosiers. You may not have had the best personnel, but your people were the most unified. Can you comment?

BUCKNER: We built that unity over two seasons under Coach (Bobby) Knight. Every time we took the court, we had the feeling we could not lose. There was an eerie understanding



Quinn loved his years in Boston.

among the players on that team—we instinctively knew what the other player on the floor was thinking. We had a sense of arrogance.

CELTICS PRIDE: One of your strengths as a player was your leadership quality. Where did that begin, and how did it continue in organized basketball?

BUCKNER: I think that goes back to high school, both on and off the athletic field. Eighty-five percent of my high school (Thorndike High in Chicago) was white, I was part of a first integration program, and I had to learn strong self-discipline at an early age. Then, one of my coaches wouldn't start me early in my career. I knew I was talented enough. But I kept my mouth shut, let my talent do the talking, and eventually I earned a starting position on a very good team. I wouldn't let anybody stop me from earning a scholarship. I had to remain out of controversy. The coach didn't think the school was ready for a black starter. When Don Nelson coached, I started as a rookie and my leadership role continued as a pro.

CELTICS PRIDE: What was the best team you played on in the pros and who was the best player you played with?

BUCKNER: Probably the best team in Milwaukee was our team in 1980-81, when we lost in the Eastern Conference Semi-Finals to Philadelphia. I was extremely sick that day—probably too high for the game. The championship team in Boston in 1983-84 was the best—winning championships is what it's all about in team sports. The best player I played with is Larry (Bird). Most people in the

league play on athletic ability only. Larry has the superior skills, plus he has savvy, and discipline on and off the court. He combines this with an ability to repeat his greatness nightly. Bird has the discipline to concentrate in the toughest moments.

CELTICS PRIDE: Much is written about how the platitudes of sports (e.g., "sacrifice") are important outside of sports. Do you think values you learned in sports apply to the business world?

BUCKNER: Definitely, and a man who has played sports—formally and informally—would be foolish not to transfer those values. You do get knocked down in the business world, so you do have to try harder. There are obstacles in a very competitive business environment, so you do have to work around them, persevere through them, get to the other side. The sum of an organization should be greater than the individual parts. All these apply in sports and in business, I believe.

CELTICS PRIDE: What are your goals personally in business?

BUCKNER: Financial independence and security for my family. I also have altruistic needs—perhaps promoting concerts along the Farm Aid line, or working in concert with charities. Just something to give something back.

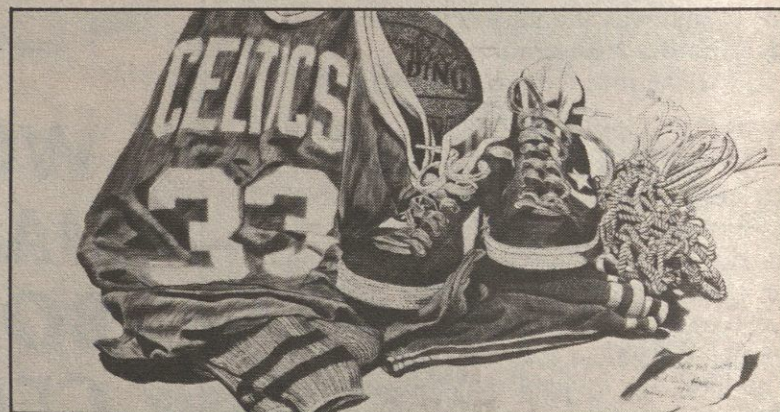
CELTICS PRIDE: Where exactly are your targets for consulting?

BUCKNER: We are attempting to analyze the needs of the professional class. Doctors, lawyers, etc. We're asking: What are the best ways to maximize your insurance plans? What are your best personal benefits? Are there ways to form partnerships which would insure maximum shelters and benefits from the government?

CELTICS PRIDE: What are your feelings about the Celtics?

BUCKNER: Everywhere I played up until I came to Boston was in a starting role. I adjusted mentally to coming in off the bench because the team is all-important to me and because I believe adjusting is what life is all about anyway. I loved my years in Boston—the team was great, the coaches, the organization, the people, the fans. Strange; I played most of my career in other places, but I'll always think of myself as a Celtic.

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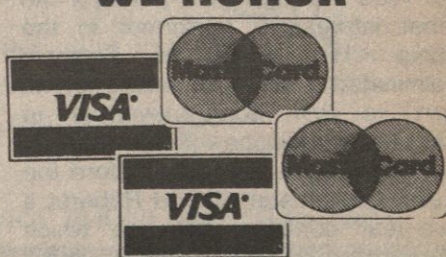
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BOSTON CELTICS PRIDE

In a Word, Rookie Camp Was . . . Different

by Bob Schron

The Celtics Rookie and Free Agent Camp was different this season. Yes, it was August, but traditionally, the camp was hosted at the end of the month. In 1986, K.C. Jones and Staff threw out the first ball on August 2nd. Unlike the previous sixteen years, this season's rookie camp was held at Brandeis University, where former Celtic Assistant GM Jeff Cohen is Athletic Director. Formerly this took place at Marshfield, where Red Auerbach ran his annual camp. But the grounds were sold now---the fields there were dark, the players were shooting hoops in Waltham.

An air of loss was at Brandeis: Len Bias was not there.

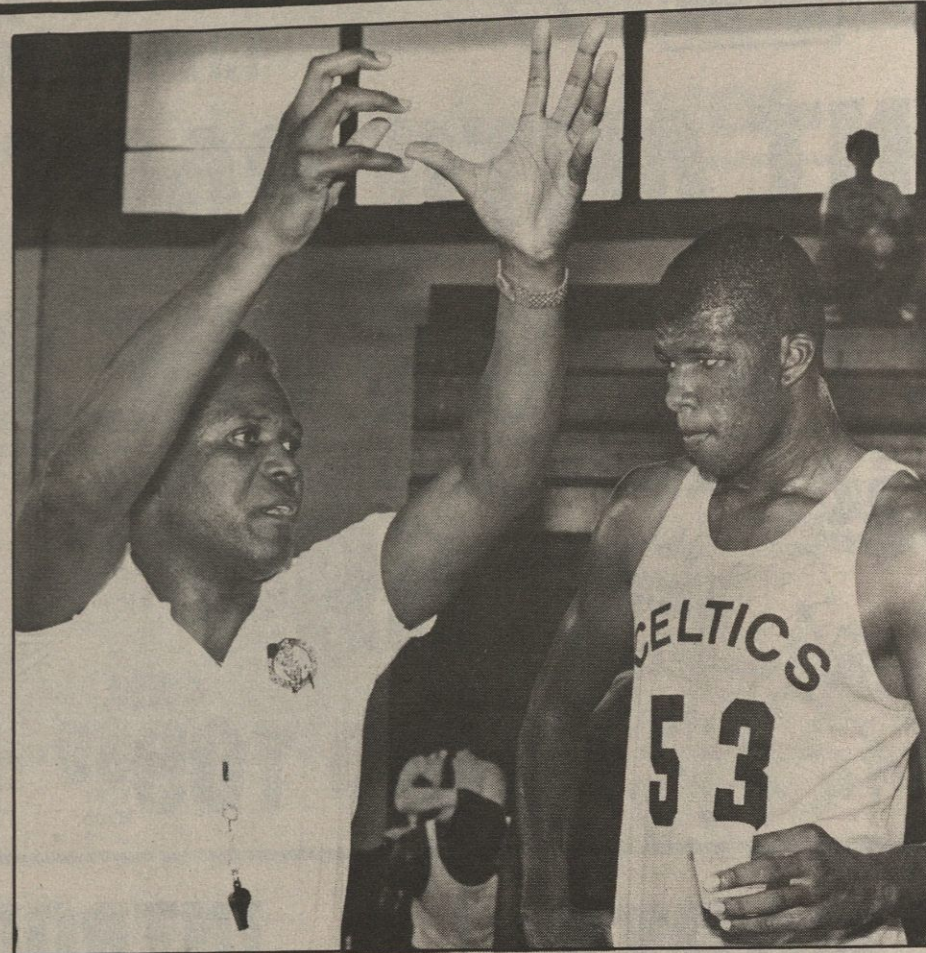
And the team's 1st-round choice of 1985, Sam Vincent, was on hand, eager to impress the coaching staff again. Last season he arrived late, actually off the plane with a newly signed guaranteed contract. Vincent didn't feel he had to impress anybody in 1985. Paradoxically, with a season under his belt and a championship year at that, Vincent was playing with a renewed sense of purpose.

A curious conglomerate, this Celtics camp. Fred Roberts, a 6-10 power forward, is a free agent still actually property of the Utah Jazz. Tony Benford, 6-4 rookie from Texas Tech, a 4th round choice who, because of Bias's death, is the team's first selection. John Garris, a great collegiate player at Boston College, now injured, hoping to catch on. A once-highly prized forward from Indiana State.

These players, and more (including Greg Kite, Rick Carlisle, and David Thirdkill) were on hand for a series of scrimmages at Brandeis. The talent was bonafide, but the obstacle was the blue chip roster of the 1986 NBA Champions. Coach Jones, who appeared relaxed, but stated otherwise, addressed the problems the rookies have in making the Celtics this season.

"This is the most difficult camp I've seen to make the team since I've been with the team. These guys come in here and they wonder: 'Where is the spot?' But rookies and free agents can't be swayed by that. If they're thinking like that, they might as well pack up and go home."

Fred Roberts was perhaps the most impressive performer in the camp. His arrival in Waltham culminated a series of moves on his part to win some leverage in bargaining positions with the Jazz. Or so it appeared. The Jazz before the 1985-86 season offered Roberts a five-year contract, but one which Roberts would have to earn a guaran-



K.C. gives Greg Anderson tips on the inside game.

tee after one season. Roberts turned the offer down before last year began. This season, when he informed the Utah team of his intention to test the free agent waters, he was told to go ahead.

"Maybe this will loosen things up a little with Utah but that's not the reason I'm here. I came with the attitude to make the Celtics. I'm not playing here to make the Utah team. I'm going to give this my best shot. When you work hard, something positive has to come of it."

On another front, Tony Benford arrived in camp under a little anticipated spotlight. Scout Ed Badger had seen Benford play some surprisingly strong offense (in addition to his physical defensive game) and the Celtics had made Benford a near-rookie selection in the fourth round of the draft. This was before Bias's death which made Benford the top choice. Yet in a sudden pressure situation, Benford remained calm.

"I figured I'd just come in here and show what I could do. At Texas Tech, I had ball-handling responsibilities as well as defense on the other team's best player--guard or forward."

"I knew most of the eyes now would be on me. I played in some pickup games in Lubbock against guys who'd been drafted. I lifted a few weights. I did some running...but there's some running going on here."

In scrimmages, Benford reportedly was reluctant to shoot, drawing the

ire of Jones. The coach told the press later.

"He's strong physically and he played good defense. But he should be looking for the open shot more. He passed up an open 12-footer today and I asked him why. You have to shoot that shot."

John Garris was the 2nd draft choice of the Cleveland Cavs in 1983 and for a long while he appeared to have a chance to play in the league. But, his relationship with then-Cavs Coach Tom Nissalke deteriorated, he was traded to the Hawks, and later, after failing to make that team, he journeyed to Europe. During stints in Italy and Spain, Garris played fairly well, but suffered a debilitating injury to his knee. He hobbled much of the C's camp. But, "I needed to be here. I passed up the Lakers' camp and I had an opportunity to play in the Celtics' tryouts," Garris observed.

In a summer setting, these NBA and near-NBA players ask where do they go from here. Benford mused about the opportunities in Europe. Garris reflected that his shot with the Celtics was indeed a long shot. He is planning on playing in the CBA, if nothing comes of these summer workouts. Then, possibly coaching.

Sam Vincent, Rick Carlisle, Greg Kite, and David Thirdkill were at Brandeis for the camp. Also in variance from past seasons, all were serious in their approach here. Formerly, veterans like M.L. Carr, Kevin McHale, or Danny Ainge made ap-

pearances, but there was a friendly, family feeling when they played. One sensed something different about this month's rookie camp veterans. Carlisle was intent on working on his offense, desiring to be "more aggressive". Kite, appearing to be in the best shape of his career, has continually worked since joining the team. He was regarded as a long-term project when the team drafted him on the 1st round in 1983. "I guess I'll always be trying to improve throughout my pro career," he observed when asked about being in the rookie camp.

David Thirdkill seemingly is confronted with the same challenge---but his contract is not guaranteed. Eternally, Thirdkill also appeared in top condition and he is beginning his annual tryout to make an NBA roster this season, in August. "That's the reality of it," he stated. "I fulfilled one of my major playing goals last June when we won the NBA title. I believe I contributed."

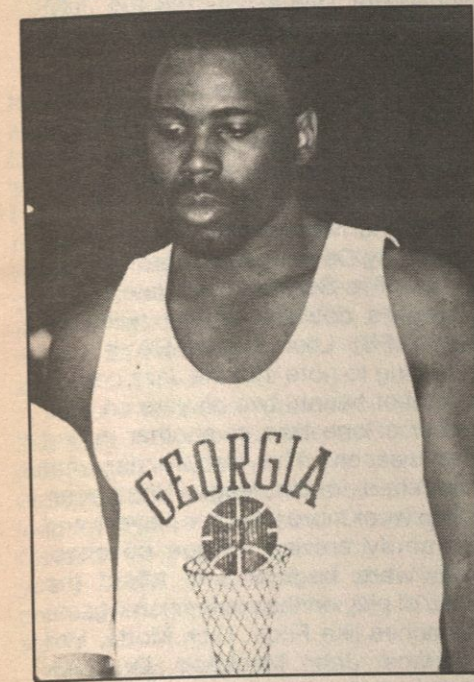
"But the competition is stiff and the demands are that much greater when you're on the world champions. I just want to play in the NBA. This is a way of showing it."

Vincent's position is apparently secure for the world champions, but he is attempting to construct a second rookie season. He played fairly well in the Brandeis sessions (afternoon and evening sessions which were open only at night). However, it was difficult to discern whether he was limited by the apparent lack of NBA talent around him or whether he still remained uncertain of his own ability at the professional level.

"They made the camp optional for me," Vincent told Steve Bulpitt of the Boston Herald. "But I thought it would be good for me to come in and work out. I'm not coming in to prove anything or set the world on fire. I hope I'm not in the situation where I need to. I just see this as a time to play hard and hopefully play well."

The Celtics rookie camp proved to be a testing ground for players of contrasting life-circumstance. Ironically, some of the best efforts were turned in by the camp counselors; i.e., collegiate players who teach the campers some fundamental skills during the day, and then join the pros at night. This group included Bruce Darymple of Georgia Tech, Reggie Lewis of Northeastern, Greg Anderson of Houston, and Dennis Hobson of Ohio State. Their spirited efforts were turned in with the abandonment of the wind. A far different situation than free-agent Roberts (a man with two teams), Benford (now the team's top draftee), Garris (anticipating already a post-playing career, or Vincent, in search of a second rookie year.

Yes, There Were Rookies at Rookie Camp



Bruce Darymple from Georgia Tech.

Besides the players who received publicity through status (Celtics veterans), novelty (4th round choice Benford, who has become the team's top draftee), and reputation (former Boston College standout John Garris), several other players filled out the rookie camp roster at Brandeis College, August 2-5. Included in this latter group were collegiate players Bruce Darymple of Georgia Tech, Reggie Lewis of Northeastern, Greg Anderson of Houston, and Dennis Hobson of Ohio State.

Darymple is perhaps the most noted, although Lewis showed the most at Brandeis. Neither has been overlooked; Darymple led Georgia Tech's backcourt for the past two years with Mark Price (drafted this year by the Cavs) as Tech advanced far into the NCAA Tournament. He's been watched by scouts since his prep school days in Vermont. He is originally from New York City. Lewis has been rated a prospective 1st-round draftee since before his junior year. Coach K.C. Jones was especially impressed with the young power forward's moves. Anderson and Hobson appeared to need the most work of the collegiates.

Also on hand at the camp were late round draft choices Greg Wendt of Detroit, Tom Ivey of Boston University, and a cut from the Phoenix Suns, Jim McCaffery of Holy Cross. John Williams, once thought to be a legitimate professional talent early in his collegiate career but undrafted in the 1986 draft, also played in the scrimmages.

Tom Sheehy, a forward at the University of Virginia, was an attendee at Dave Cowens Basketball School in Weston. He entered his

senior season on the cusp; some think he's a legitimate 1st round player, others believe he has far less ability than that. Sheehy is aware of the conflicting views and agrees with them.

"This is the year which will tell. It's up to me; at this point in a player's career, he has to ask himself if he's willing to pay the price, and make the major commitment to become a professional prospect."

"I was recruited heavily by

Boston College and Syracuse, but I wanted to go the ACC. I'm not knocking the Big East---but there's a certain magic about the Atlantic Coast Conference. Besides, I didn't want to play against Bernie Fine, who's a coach at Syracuse. There were conflicting loyalties."

"A college player plays at camps for conditioning, exposure, and the need to keep up with the competition. I'm not so sure I want to play in the pros if I don't make it next year. It's a

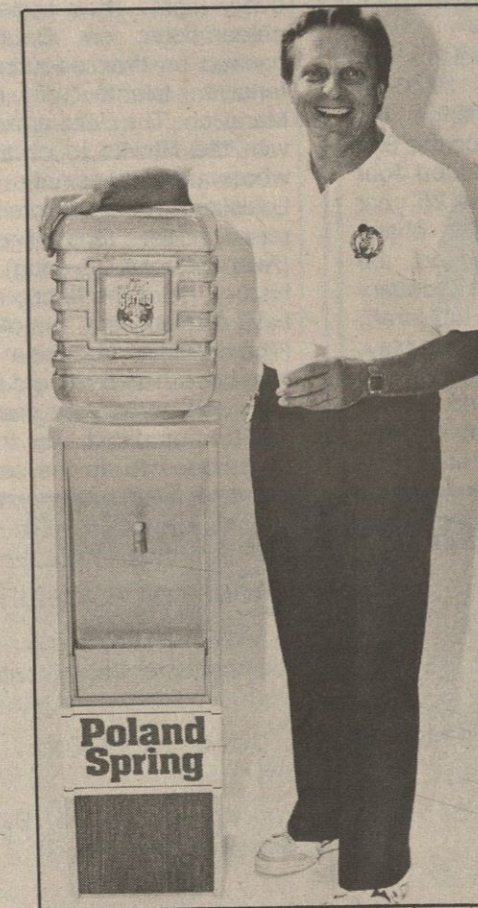
matter of the breaks. If I get picked by the right team, I'll have a shot. I look at it this way: there are players in the pros I feel I am better than. But there are players on the playground who are better than me."

"I'll see, but it is a matter of breaks. I played against Bias and he was a helluva player. It was a terrible tragedy. I don't know how well he would have played in the Celtics system. I just am not sure about him there. But it was a terrible shock."

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NBA Considering Adding Teams

What Are The Effects Of Expansion?

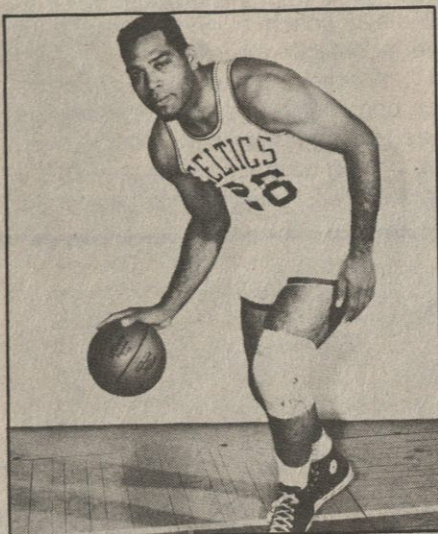
With the National Basketball seriously considering expansion ---the issue is practically guaranteed to be the major topic at the league meetings next month in New York---teams must prepare for the losses in personnel which accompany such moves. The Celtics represent a prime example to study the effects of this procedure. In the past, the established teams in the league have been required to "expose" some of the veterans on their current roster. In the most recent expansion (Dallas entering the league in 1980), teams were required to submit a list of three veterans and then, after the choice by Dallas, were allowed to pull back a player from the original list. Boston, although not hurt directly, lost Jeff Judkins through free agency after the previous season.

This season, the Celtics roared away to one of the finest seasons any team has ever had in the league. They won the fourth highest total of games. They were 50-1 at home (regular season and playoffs). The C's finished 15-3 in the playoffs, including the win in the all-important last game of the post-season. They did all this with a stable, veteran roster, a group which has played together for the past five years. Thus, expansion at this time poses a difficult question to a team which has thrived on its ability to play together as teams have changes continually around them (Witness the series of trades during this season's college draft).

The league began expansion geographically in 1960, when Bob Short transferred the Minneapolis Lakers to the west coast. But major change in the league began after the 1966-67 season (the 76ers were champions) when Seattle and San Diego entered the league. This expanded the league to 12 teams, and although the meaning in terms of player loss was not great to the established teams, its influence would be important a year later, when the Rockets drafted Elvin Hayes.

The league would add Milwaukee and Phoenix a year later, after the Celtics had wrested the title away from the Sixers. In that 67-68 year, the Celtics defeated the Lakers in six games to win the title. The two teams did battle a year later, but they were considerably different foes. The Celtics had to yield Wayne Embry to the Bucks in the 1st expansion draft, and the Lakers lost Gail Goodrich to the Suns.

The larger significance surrounding expansion was two-fold. First, the league was becoming inter-continental, becoming more sensitive to the impact of television and its markets. Second, player movement



Wayne Embry: lost to expansion.

was becoming more common: when the Celtics defended their crown against the Lakers in 1969 (the last team to do it), Wilt Chamberlain had negotiated his own trade from the 76ers to the Lakers. Expansion in the league meant more opportunities for fans, cities, owners, and players.

The addition of Cleveland and Buffalo in time for the 1970-71 season continued to change the structure of the league. For the first time, the competition included four divisions which replaced the 25 year old conference setup. The champions of the previous season, the New York Knicks, allowed secondary players to float through the draft. Gone from the Knicks were Don May, Bill Hosket, and Nate Bowman to the Buffalo franchise. Cleveland, under Bill Fitch, was able to obtain John Johnson, who was a star later with

the 1979 champion Seattle SuperSonics. The Knicks failed to repeat their championship, losing in the Eastern Conference final series to the Baltimore Bullets, and the Bullets in turn were swept away in The Finals by the Milwaukee Bucks.

Again the draft reflected an important, latent influence of expansion. The Bucks had entered the league only three years before, had lingered in the cellar of the league, and as a result, garnered a high collegiate draft choice. Their 1969-70 plum in that draft: Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. At times it is ancient history, but in his early seasons, Abdul-Jabbar was an absolute impenetrable force on offense. By the time his second season arrived, he was able to carry the young Bucks franchise to the title. He was that good.

The next wave of league growth occurred after the 1973-74 season. The New Orleans Jazz entered the NBA organization, replete with dreams of filling the Superdome every night. Their hopes to set off celebrations on Bourbon Street banked on their securing of the offensive talents of Pistol Pete Maravich. The Jazz arranged a trade with the Hawks to obtain Maravich, who was a charismatic collegiate at Louisiana State University. Maravich remains the most prolific scorer (Average: 44.08 ppg) in college history, he of the floppy socks, flying hair, machine-like, pistol-like jumper. (The Atlanta franchise themselves had hoped to build a following with Maravich when they drafted Pete in 1970, but didn't. By trading Pete, they hoped to do the same by drafting

David Thompson with the Jazz' pick but the Hawks lost Thompson to the ABA).

New Orleans' entry into the league again influenced the texture of the ensuing 1974-75 season. The Celtics, defending champions that year, really lost nobody of significance. Rather, the Green was more affected by Dave Cowen's broken foot in the Pre-Season, and later, Don Chaney's decision to sign with the Spirit of St. Louis in the ABA. It is interesting to note that the Jazz carried a total of twenty-two players on their roster at one time or another during that season. This capsulizes what happened in the league that year; there were more jobs, for players and for newly arriving college coaches, who were beginning to affect the style of play on the professional game (Coaches like Fitch, Dick Motta, Phil Johnson, John MacLeod, Dr. Jack Ramsay). A premium was placed on deciphering sources of unanticipated talent and the Golden State Warriors won the championship that year---symbolic of the trend, with four players who had been free agents at some point of their careers Charles Dudley, Steve Brace, George Johnson, and Bill Bridges).

Dallas' arrival into the NBA in time for the 1980-81 season had a subtle, long-term effect on the defending champions of that year, the Los Angeles Lakers. The Mavericks were able to slowly bring Brad Davis along as a very useful point guard on their team. That same season, the Lakers failed to make it past the first round of the post-season because Magic Johnson was injured most of the year and failed to come back strongly late in the year. Backups like Brad Holland were lacking in necessary professional skills and the Lakers made several trades beginning that year (Eddie Jordan, Clay Johnson, and then they eventually traded the vintage Norm Nixon before the 1983-84 season).

If expansion does take place, what will be the influence on the Celtics? There may be some damage---Red Auerbach recently observed that the present nucleus should insure the team being a contender for the next four years, so a deletion would assuredly affect his design. The immediate question mark seems to be at center: who to leave available, the veterans with large contracts, or journeyman role-player Greg Kite? How important is Rick Carlisle? What is the actual potential of Sam Vincent? David Thirdkill would seem to be the odd man out, if the present roster continued through next season. But who would be the other player left available? The coming season will provide answers, based on these players performances.

"Thinning the Ranks"

EXPANSION TEAM

Chicago Bulls, 1966 (33-48)
San Diego Rockets, 1967 (15-67)
Seattle SuperSonics, 1967 (23-59)
Milwaukee Bucks, 1968 (27-55)
Phoenix Suns, 1968 (16-66)
Buffalo Braves, 1970 (22-60)

Cleveland Cavs, 1970 (15-67)
New Orleans Jazz, 1974 (23-59)
Dallas Mavs, 1980 (15-67)

In addition to the players lost from the present champions, the Celtics lost several players when the league expanded.

EXPANSION TEAM

Chicago, 1966
San Diego and Seattle, 1967
Milwaukee and Phoenix, 1968
Buffalo and Cleveland, 1970

New Orleans, 1974
Dallas, 1980

CHAMPIONS AND PLAYERS LOST

Boston Celtics: None
Philadelphia 76ers: Dave Gambee.

Boston Celtics: Wayne Embry

New York Knicks: Don May, Bill Hosket
Nate Bowman, John Warren

Boston Celtics: None
Los Angeles Lakers: None

CELTICS PLAYERS

None
Toby Kimball, Jim Barnett
Wayne Embry
Emmette Bryant, Larry Siegfried (Traded to Rockets after draft)
None
Jeff Judkins

Are This Year's Free Agents Worth It?

The Price is Right?

The primary method used by teams in the NBA to build themselves is the college draft. Trades are another means which can be used to shore up weak areas on a club. Yet another alternative for a team to improve itself is signing players through the free-agent market. However, due to salary cap restrictions and the lessened willingness of franchises to empty its pocketbooks for free-agent signees, there's not as much traffic on the market as there was, say, a decade ago.

There have been several cases in the past few years where FAs of marketable quality have gone unsigned and simply drifted out of the league. Remember the Cleveland Cavalier free-agent mania of a few years back? That kind of stuff will probably never be seen in the NBA again.

Anyway, there are many familiar names on this year's free-agent list, and some pretty good talent on hand. Here is an evaluation of those players without contracts as of July:

OTIS BIRDSONG, G, NEW JERSEY NETS - Injuries have slowed this four-time All-Star somewhat, but Birdsong is still a dangerous off guard. A backcourt featuring Birdsong and first-round pick Pearl Washington sounds pretty good, so re-signing Birdsong wouldn't be a bad idea for New Jersey. One factor operating against Birdsong is if he has a strong desire to leave the Nets, it's doubtful anyone would be willing to pick up the tab.

DUDLEY BRADLEY, G, WASHINGTON BULLETS - The brother of former Celtic Charles, this Bradley isn't much of a scorer, but is well thought of when it comes to his defensive ability. It is that which made the Indiana Pacers take him 13th overall in 1979. Bradley should wind up in somebody's uniform if the Bullets don't retain his services.

MAURICE CHEEKS, G, PHILADELPHIA 76ERS - Cheeks has been one of the premier point guards in the NBA for years, which would make one think there's no way the Sixers would let him leave town. But this is the same team that traded Moses Malone to another team in the same division, so one never knows. Cheeks is one of the few free-agents in this year's crop who could virtually name his price, as pure point guards are few and far between.

MICHAEL COOPER, G/F, LOS ANGELES LAKERS - "Coop" is regarded as one of the toughest defenders from either guard or forward in the league, and his flashy dunks can bring fans out of their seats. Despite being overshadowed in L.A. by the likes of Magic, Kareem and James Worthy, Cooper is star

material. Laker owner Jerry Buss will have to whip out the wallet to retain Cooper's service, and he will be well worth it.

LESTER CONNER, G, GOLDEN STATE WARRIORS - A number-one pick of a couple of years ago who has yet to prove himself worthy of that status. But in all fairness, Conner hasn't received much playing time. A player perhaps worth taking a chance on.

WAYNE COOPER, C/F, DENVER NUGGETS - Once thought of as no more than a journeyman, the well-travelled Cooper has seen his stock rise dramatically over the last couple of years, especially during his stint with the Nuggets. A hard worker who gets the job done in an unspectacular manner who would be an asset for any club.

TERRY CUMMINGS, F, MILWAUKEE BUCKS - Right up there with Kevin McHale when it comes to the NBA's elite power forwards. Cummings has seemingly shaken off his heart problems and might very well be the most valuable free-agent of the entire bunch. Don't expect Don Nelson to let him get away, though.

WALTER DAVIS, G/F, PHOENIX SUNS - Personal problems and injuries have diminished Davis' status somewhat, but the "Greyhound" is still a top-flight player. Look for the Suns to retain him.

T.R. DUNN, G/F, DENVER NUGGETS - Although unheralded, Dunn is probably the best defense player in the league--period. He has made himself a key performer in the league, despite never having averaged more than 10 points a game during a season. Dunn is also a crack rebounder, too. You can bet Denver Coach Doug Moe and the Nugget front office is well aware of Dunn's value, as are other NBA clubs. Dunn is one of those few players who could be an asset on any team in the league.

JIM PETERSON, F, HOUSTON ROCKETS - Became more and more valuable to the Rockets as the season went along. Peterson will be around this league a long time, be it with Houston or someone else. The best way to describe him is a Kurt Rambis with a lot more in the natural skills department.

DAN SCHAYES, C/F, DENVER NUGGETS - A former 13th overall pick who has settled comfortably into his place of relief man at center or forward. He probably won't draw much interest in the market, so if the Nuggets want Schayes back, they have a great shot at retaining him.

LaSALLE THOMPSON, C, KANSAS CITY KINGS - A tough, young

pivot who appears to finally be developing into a good one. Thompson is by no stretch of the imagination a Kareem or Robert Parish, but he's a lot better than a lot of starting centers you could name. If a team needed a center and wanted to get one through the free-agent route, Thompson would be the man to take.

SEDALE THREATT, G, PHILADELPHIA - All right, so don't invite Threatt and Danny Ainge to the same party. But the sixth-round pick came from nowhere to make his presence felt in Philadelphia. And with Andrew Toney's health in doubt, Threatt could be one of Philly's guards of the future. But they've got to sign him first.

DARNEL VALENTINE, G, LOS ANGELES CLIPPERS - A defensive-minded guard who can also make the good pass. If the Clippers are smart, which they haven't been for a long time, they'll take a long look at re-signing Valentine.

KIKI VANDEWEGHE, F, PORTLAND TRAIL BLAZERS - One of the best pure scoring forwards in the NBA, Vandeweghe has his share of

detractors, but no one can dispute the fact he can put the ball in the basket with amazing regularity. If you want 25 or so points a game from the small forward spot, Kiki's your man.

SPUD WEBB, G, ATLANTA HAWKS - This adorable, little character is no mere freak--he is a legitimate NBA point guard. The Hawks as well as every team in the NBA found that out last year. Plus, Webb is a nice gate attraction, which greatly enhances his value. You'd better believe the Hawks want him.

GERALD WILKINS, F, NEW YORK KNICKS - Dominique's brother has some talent but since the Knicks drafted Kenny Walker, Wilkins' value has diminished somewhat.

GUS WILLIAMS, G, WASHINGTON BULLETS - A former juggernaut in this league who seems to be heading the other way. Will many teams want to ink a soon-to-be-33-year-old guard who commands a fat contract? Probably not.

ORLANDO WOOLRIDGE, F, CHICAGO BULLS - Woolridge appeared to be coming into his own last season, but didn't help himself when he went AWOL. The word is the Bulls definitely don't want him back which cuts Woolridge's bargaining power considerably.

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A Formula for Repeating

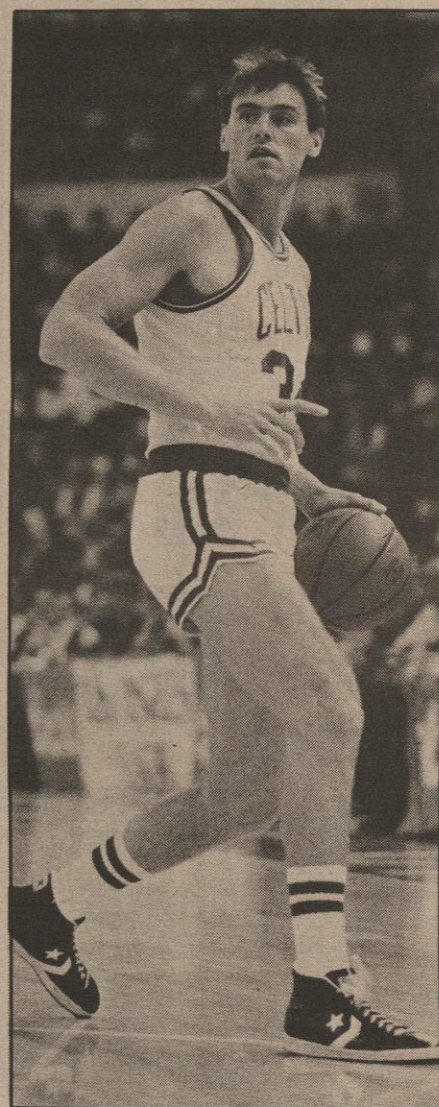
We have recently concluded the Celtics Rookie and Free Agent Camp, the first step in building our team for the coming (1986-87) season. I was asked at the camp if I was savoring the feeling of having won the title last season, when we defeated the Houston Rockets, 4-2, in The Finals. My answer was, yes, I did enjoy the glow of success. For three days, I do not want to appear ungracious, however.

The honesty of competition in the NBA now is that players and teams are so talented that you can't rest too long on your laurels. For example, the number of trades made during the time of the draft, including players of the caliber of Moses Malone, Jeff Ruland, Roy Hinson, Brad Daugherty. Trades by other teams, even Philadelphia, Washington, or Los Angeles (The Lakers acquired Billy Thompson, a rookie from Louisville, and might trade James Worthy!) do not mean the Celtics change also. These moves do however reflect the pressure opponents place on their rivals, of course, the Celtics among them. I do feel the pressure in my job. But we won last season, an extremely satisfying year. We have a strong nucleus back. But the feeling here sometimes is you play at times, not to lose. But I attempt to keep these times at a minimum.

The rookie camp this season was held at Brandeis, from August 2-5. The college there did a super job of hosting the camp and I was pleased with the efforts turned in by the players there. Fred Roberts (a Jazz player), Tony Benford, Dave Colbert, Greg Wendt, and Tom Ivey played hard. Our veterans, Greg Kite, Rick Carlisle, Sam Vincent, and David Thirdkill were also in camp and I think helped themselves by attending.

Our team is extremely difficult to earn a spot on this season.

We are stable and strong at positions 1 through 9, on a team



Rick Carlisle helped himself.

which played very well together last season. In a sense, our ballclub's success perpetuates further success, and we have contracted with all our players throughout the next few years. The rookies and free agents are essentially competing for spots 9 through 12, but we are set there, too, mostly. I sincerely think the players in camp were talented and diligent athletes. The obstacle is that we have the championship, and we have won the title with a group of men who achieved this together. And

if you bring in a new player to fill a late spot on the roster, you may win one game on the replacement's talent, but you may sacrifice several others while building a new nucleus.

Repeating. Sometimes I have to smile; the subject is brought up in the summer and Pre-Season (the teams aren't formed yet, the decisions on the Celtics haven't been finalized yet). I sense there is a hidden assumption built into the "jinx"; the media bring up questions about repeating, because they presume it can't be done. I recall the latter stage of this past season, when Boston writers were asking coaches who came into the Garden whether the Celtics were a certainty to win. Hubie Brown and Kevin Loughery answered, "Well, if it's a certainty, why do we bother to play the games?" We plan to approach this season in a similar way. We will play each game and segment of the season to our maximum, and then worry about repeating during the playoffs.

Teams gun for you when you're the champion. You're asked constantly about the possibility. Teams always have come after the Celtics for as long as I've been associated with the team. I wish I had answers, a formula for repeating. The last time a team won titles back-to-back was in 1969. Boston finished 4th that year during the regular season, and regrouped during the playoffs, which then were a three round playoff system. Although the conditions were different, the task was accomplished by focusing team energies during that (late) confined time period.

That season was the final year of Bill Russell's career, and it concluded an era when the team was kept together—with minor changes—for six seasons (Bob Cousy's retirement, and John Havlicek's rise as a superstar). Team stability might be the solution to repeating, but it's a puzzle which is attended to after the regular season has been played out.

We are headed to Las Vegas for a brief vacation and begin to return to the office regularly early in September. I feel very refreshed after some music, entertainment, time with the family. Yet, I'm looking forward to the new challenges of the coming year.

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Jimmy Rodgers Stays at Home

Coaching and Job Security in the National Basketball Association would seem to be mutually exclusive terms as we head into the second half of the eighties decade. During the past season (plus two summers), eleven of the twenty-three teams changed their head coaches. A man's length of time in the position seemed to matter little: from George Karl, who almost won Coach of the Year in 1984-85 only to be fired one-half year later to Dr. Jack Ramsay, a man with fifteen years tenure as a Coach, coaches of both sound or inadequate mettle were fired.

Introducing Jimmy Rodgers, Director of Player Personnel and Assistant Coach of the Boston Celtics. Rodgers is a veteran of fifteen years in the league, the past five with the Celtics. This is a man of the highest competence in the professional game; his understanding of multiple offenses, zone defenses, individual playing styles ranks with the finest in the modern game. This is not lost on front offices around the league.

During the past year, New Jersey, Cleveland, Chicago, San Antonio, and the Warriors have made inquiries into Rodgers' availability. Often, respected men's names are released to the media to make a team's "search" appear legitimate, when in fact, the team wasn't serious about hiring the said person at all. K.C. Jones suffered this plight several years ago when he was the Celtics' assistant. Yet, from indications, Rodgers was being actively sought as these teams hired new coaches.

Before the draft, General Manager Jan Volk treated the prospective offers seriously. "Jimmy's not just an assistant coach. His role in the team's scheme is unique; as player personnel director he makes decisions about the makeup of the team. He coordinates scouting. Teams may talk to him," added the GM, "but not until after the draft." Volk, speaking in late May, was responding to the Warriors' interest in Rodgers.

"I'm happy in Boston," says Rodgers. "Our family is settled here (Jim and Donna Rodgers have two sons, Tim and Matt). We've accomplished a lot here.

"It's just not that simple, moving on to a head coaching job. The Celtics are special... When I was in Cleveland, we had an idea (as an opponent) that the Celtics had a sophisticated understanding of what the game was all about. Now that I'm participating in the acts of the organization, I believe



Breaking up would be hard to do.

even more that the Celtics are important.

"I think a man gains in prestige by being associated with the Celtics. It's intangible, but real. I think I've grown professionally here and that in turn has improved the quality of my contributions."

The assistant coach in professional basketball withstands a web of contradictions. The position in one sense is exactly defined in its adjective, i.e., assistant. There is internal and external pressure to "move up." But, the assistant coach reaches this lofty status (an assistant coach in the National Basketball Association is a job envied by millions of coaches) by being completely committed to the team ideal. Assistants take deserved pride in helping a team reach its goal.

"Don't forget," smiles Rodgers with self-respect. "We've won three championships in six years."

Jimmy Rodgers was introduced to the game as a high school player at the DePaul Coach Ray Meyer's Basketball Camp when the player was a sophomore in high school in Franklin, Illinois. He was recruited heavily by Illinois, Wisconsin, Northwestern, and Iowa, finally selecting Iowa because he wanted to play in the Big Ten and he wanted to be seen by his folks. He

considered dentistry after he felt he wouldn't play pro ball, but changed his mind in his senior year. He received an assistant's job to Coach Bill Fitch at the University of North Dakota in 1966. After one season, he took over for Fitch when the latter moved to Bowling Green.

In three seasons as Head Coach at North Dakota, he recorded records of 15-9, 11-14, and 13-12. "He was hampered by three things," recalls North Dakota Sports Information Director Lee Bohnet. "First, all of the talent left (including former Knick Phil Jackson) when Fitch left. Second, there were an uncommon number of injuries while he was coach, and third, some recruits just didn't pan out.

"He continued to use Fitch's basic system, but what was outstanding about him was his ability to communicate with his players."

Rodgers' career advancement continued after the 1968-69 season. He spent one season as an assistant to Lannie Van Eeman at Arkansas before rejoining Fitch in Cleveland in 1971. The two built a championship contender throughout the next seven seasons, and then Fitch left for Boston. Rodgers stayed on in Cleveland, but ran into problems there with the arrival of owner Ted Stepien. Stepien tore down a program, Rodgers soon departed, and Fitch and Red Auerbach brought him to Boston. Many speculated that Rodgers might leave with Fitch in 1983, but the then assistant met with K.C. Jones after the latter was hired to replace Fitch. If there was an element of the unknown when the two men worked under the centralized authority of Fitch, Jones's and Rodgers' relationship is doubly strong now.

"I've never realized how effective Jimmy was," admitted Jones later. "He's sound with people and he's a bonafide expert in basketball matters."

Time passes and the question will likely be posed to Jimmy Rodgers: Will he be a head coach in the NBA? It's significant to note that he is an excellent communicator (he reads psychology books)—Rodgers is laid back and his type seemingly are able to draw out the trust of others, unthreatening. Yet, the flip side to this quality is it potentially does not fit a head man's personality.

Rodgers shrugs off baseball man Leo Durocher's maxim, "Nice guys finish last." "Look at K.C.," reminds Rodgers.

Look at the head coaches around the league. Fitch has cajoled one league champion and another team into the Finals (Boston in 1981;

Houston in 1986). He's one type. Include Hubie Brown, John McLeod, Dave Wohl, Dick Motta, and George Karl here, too.

There was some doubt that Matt Goukas would succeed, ascending to the head job after being the second man in Philadelphia under the superb Billy Cunningham. But Goukas did very well last year, being able to convert "Julius Erving's Team" into "Charles Barkley's club." Included among "players' coaches" are K.C. Jones, Pat Riley, Don Chaney, Lenny Wilkens, and Doug Moe. Interestingly, Mike Fratello belongs here now, after emerging from the years of solitude in Hubie Brown's demonic shadow. And Fratello was Coach of the Year last season.

These categories are the extremes and broad; questions remain—where to fit Don Nelson, for example, surely a communicator (and one of the first in the league in the modern era) but also a shouter at players like (ex-Buck) Alton Lister. And Jack Ramsay, highly systematic, smart enough to know the necessity of talk, but yet profoundly committed to the profession of coaching, so much that he risks being more the image of a coach than substance.

And yet the role, the job, the glamour, the tension of head coaching is something Jimmy Rodgers will likely decide definitively down the line. Chris Ford sees Rodgers as certain head coaching material, but Rodgers insists he is happy right now. "I have a strong input into building teams in Boston and this is what I want."

Perhaps Jimmy Rodgers will eventually coach in Boston, where the head job is presently taken by Jones, possibly the best in the business. So, the availability may not exist for another five years. A major priority for Rodgers during the past several years has been his family—by then, All-State Walpole Quarterback son Matt will be securely in college. When Bernie Mann of the Nets insisted Rodgers move to New Jersey to take over the Nets, that opportunity suddenly was cloudy for Rodgers.

The Personal life crossing over into professional life counts for Jimmy Rodgers. He is perceptive—he realizes that his style, professionalism, and expertise fit correctly with the Celtics. He's happy and his family is settled. It would take an unusual offer to lure him away from Boston. His highly competitive nature seems fulfilled here, having succeeded in winning three championships, and his talents in player evaluation, scouting, and coaching are being challenged and utilized.



Just How Great Are the Celtics?

The Boston Celtics' season of excellence in the year just concluded invited comparisons to other great National Basketball Association champions. Thus far, the bases for comparison have been speculative; matching up champions of different eras is similar to comparing premier films, musical compositions, or outstanding carpentry jobs. Each film, musical, or carpentry work is different, and the category has qualities about them which make comparisons meaningful for only films, only musicals, or only carpentry works.

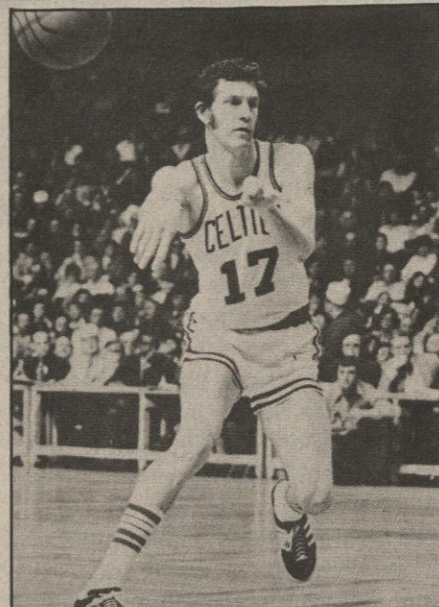
Comparing NBA champions of different eras is similarly hard. Sometimes the only comparisons which are meaningful are those which match teams from the same few years, rather than matching up last year's Celtics and the Celtics of twenty-four years ago.

Yet, the attempt should be made, if only to give further depth to the all-important won-lost statistic. The following five champions are reviewed: the 1962-63 Boston Celtics, 1966-67 Philadelphia 76ers, 1971-72 Los Angeles Lakers, 1982-83 Philadelphia 76ers, and the 1985-86 Celtics. The first Celtic team was chosen because it was the C's team of the dynasty which included Bob Cousy, Bill Russell, John Havlicek, Frank Ramsey, and Sam Jones. The key duo is Ramsey-Havlicek. The first Sixer champion was voted the "Best Ever" Title-Holder in 1980. The Lakers won 33 straight games in 1971-72, and the '82-83 Sixers went 12-1 in the playoffs. Last year's Celtics were 67-15, 50-1 at home, and 15-3 in the post-season.

The lineups of the five champions included:

62-63 CELTICS
F-Tom Sanders
F-Tom Heinsohn
C-Bill Russell
G-Bob Cousy
G-Sam Jones
66-67 SIXERS
F-Chet Walker
F-Luke Jackson
C-Wilt Chamberlain
G-Hal Greer
G-Wally Jones

71-72 LAKERS
F-Jim McMillan
F-Happy Hairston
C-Wilt Chamberlain
G-Jerry West
G-Gail Goodrich
82-83 SIXERS
F-Julius Erving
F-Marc Iavaroni
C-Moses Malone
G-Mo Cheeks
G-Andrew Toney
85-86 CELTICS
F-Larry Bird



John Havlicek: Made any team great.

F-Kevin McHale
C-Robert Parish
G-Dennis Johnson
G-Danny Ainge

It is necessary to first compare these groups, before discussing what the starting fives do not show, namely, the depth of each team. The Russell Celtics depended on Cousy's ability to run the break, which in turn depended on Russell's near-total domination of the game: defensive boards, shot-blocking, etc. Sam Jones' running and shooting games, Heinsohn's offensive rebounding, and Sander's defense and speed made this group well-balanced. In 1966-67, the Sixers were brute power; Chamberlain had a career season (24.1 ppg, 24.2 rpg, 7.8 apg), Jackson and Walker intimidated on defense and went by on the offensive end. Jones and Greer brought cockiness and finesse to the games. The Lakers of 1972 used a blistering fast break--keyed by Chamberlain's defensive rebounding and Hairston's offensive rebounding. Other teams could not run on Los Angeles. And Jerry West was a superstar in the backcourt. As Chamberlain did in 1966-67, Moses Malone was easily the game's best in 1982-83. And Julius Erving remained at the peak of his power as a player, augmented that year by Andrew Toney and Maurice Cheeks in the backcourt.

Last season's Celts were another complete unit. Bird may be the best ever, McHale has developed into an unstoppable force, and Parish was in on his third NBA title (no coincidence). This front-court oriented club is steered by Dennis Johnson (playmaker and defensive spark) and a Danny Ainge resurgent back to the confidence of his Brigham Young years.

Little is different among these team's starting unit efficiency. But



Red: The expert at handling men.

other factors remain to be evaluated, including depth, coaching, caliber of opposition, individual talent, and durability.

DEPTH. If rankings were formed, it would appear, 1-'63 Celtics; 2-'86 Celtics; 3-'67 Sixers; 4-'83 Sixers; 5-'72 Lakers.

The '63 Celtics had Hall-of-Famers on their bench, several deep. John Havlicek and Frank Ramsey identified the need for the 6th Man, K.C. Jones was brilliant on defense, Jim Loscutoff an ideal role-player. Their '86 grandchildren receive that ranking because their key reserve is Bill Walton, a premier Center. The 1967 Sixers were ahead of the eighties model because, although Bill Cunningham and Bobby Jones resembled each other, Cunningham in 1967 had Larry Costello, Bill Melchionni, Mat Goukas, and Dave Gambee as bench-mates. Bobby Jones, in 1983, was the best that year, but he was a strategic substitute, compensating for Iavaroni's place in the starting lineup. The Lakers in 1972 were essentially a 6-man team, with Pat Riley a replacement to give the starters brief breathers.

COACHING. If ever there were a heaven for second-guessing, coaching is it. The coaches of these teams were among the best, each different in approach, but similar, too. Red Auerbach coached the first Celtic entry--he's written the book (Expert in handling men, designing teams). K.C. Jones and Billy Cunningham (1983 Sixers) are similar: players' coach, masterful at judging the pace of the game, exacting the feel of a game; Bill Sharman, a student of Auerbach, his former coach, put together perhaps the best fast-break over one season in the league's annals. Alex Hannum coached the 1967 Sixers; he was superlative at getting to the heart of a basketball problem. In 1967, he, like Sharman

later, was able to cajole a total game from Wilt "The Stilt" Chamberlain. If achieved, a championship was near at hand.

CALIBER OF OPPOSITION. According to Oscar Robertson, the Celtics won in the Russell era for two reasons. "First, they had Russell. Second, they were the only team to draft and build a team with all positions in mind." In other words, teams had an Oscar Robertson, a Jerry West-Elgin Baylor tandem or a Bob Pettit in the early sixties. But whole teams, other than the Celtics, were rare among Boston's opposition.

If the competition reflected a lack of understanding in the early sixties, expansion characterized the Lakers championship season. The LA 33 straight were garnered over a new Cleveland and Buffalo pair, a five-year-old Phoenix team, new franchises in Seattle and Houston (shifted from San Diego). The nod for the strongest opposition likely goes to the year Moses and Company took it all. Denver averaged 123.2 ppg to lead the offense, and defensively, eight teams averaged holding foes below 105 ppg. Last season, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar seemed to show his advancing age, which immediately lessens the talent-level around the NBA. Ralph Sampson and Akeem Alajuwon have power and height but have yet to demonstrate guile.

Finally, the question of durability. Boston was able to win repeatedly through the sixties and their heirs (because of Red Auerbach's constancy) have continued to thrive. The Sixers of both eras did not stay together; Wilt Chamberlain fled in the mid-sixties, and Harold Katz alienated Malone to the act of actually bartering the great players. The 1971-72 Lakers grew old (West and Chamberlain) and injured.

How great are the Celtics then as instances are glanced at? Their starters are superstars, because of Walton's presence. But the Redhead has that cursed injury background. The coaching is superb, and their margin of victory over tall and individually talented opposition was remarkable---114.1 to 104.7. K.C. Jones thinks this team is the best of all time, but he is hardly an unbiased observer. His reasoning: the size of the frontline, Ainge and Johnson, and Larry Bird. Bill Russell concurs, pointing out that Bird's conscious efforts to involve his teammates makes him the greatest ever (When Bird and Russell stand next to each other, the present forward and past center are even in height). How great? The Celtics are a tall, running renegade. But they have to win this year to solidify their place in the history. Otherwise, it's comparing musicals and film.

Magic Johnson Acquires Rights to Larry Bird

By Steve Lipofsky

High on the list of "What ifs" of any good hoop fan would be "What if Larry Bird were teamed with Magic Johnson." Speculation became reality August 10 as 12,500 people assembled in U.C.L.A.'s Pauley Pavilion to watch an All-Star game organized by "Magic" Johnson to benefit the United Negro College Fund. Since it was Magic's ball, he got to choose sides, and Larry was his first choice. Though Larry and Magic did play together for two minutes in the 1978 college Invitational Games, they have been cast as arch-rivals ever since, which was what made this one game "marriage" such a treat.

Jerry West coached the Blue team, starting Bird, Johnson, Herb Williams, Robert Reid, and Mark Aguirre. Their bench consisted of Clyde Drexler, Kenny Fields, Byron Scott, Kiki Vanderweghe, and "Spud" Webb. Bill Russell's White team started Dominique Wilkins, Charles Barkley, Ralph Sampson, Isiah Thomas, and Rolando



Ignited the crowd.

Blackman. They were backed by Michael Cage, Michael Cooper, Cliff Levingston, Kurt Rambis, and Reggie Theus.

The first quarter saw Magic and Bird put on a passing clinic that brought the Blue the early lead. The ball seemed a hot potato as the two passed it back and forth with virtuosity, caring more about the assist than the basket.

In the end, however, Dominique Wilkins, the "Human Highlight Film," lived up to his title and led the White to a 170-166 win with his game high 40, not so quiet, points. At times the play resembled a Fourth of July fireworks finale. There was too much to take in at once. Larry and Magic would ignite the crowd with their explosive passing-shooting display at one end, only to be answered by a spectacular series of dunks by Dominique at the other.

With a little over a minute remaining, the Blue had closed to within 6 points and Larry had a chance to catch up with a couple of three point attempts but his new Hawaiian suntan

betrayed a little summer vacation rust as he went 10 for 21 for the day.

Immediately following the game, the fans were treated to an impromptu slam-dunk competition which was something of a redundancy considering the nature of the event they had just witnessed. The crowd didn't seem to mind, though, as they tried to outdo one another with one inventive stuff after another. Spud Webb, the League's reigning dunk king (and shortest player at 5'7"), was a particular favorite, but, once again, it was Dominique that stole the show, slapping five with the spectators after each of his acrobatic impossible slams.

The event was an out and out success, raising over \$400,000 (along with the previous night's black tie affair) for the United Negro College Fund, delighting the crowd, and making Magic's dream of playing with Larry come true. This success coupled with the continued support of sponsors Polaroid, American Airlines and Anheuser-Busch, should ensure this game as an annual event.

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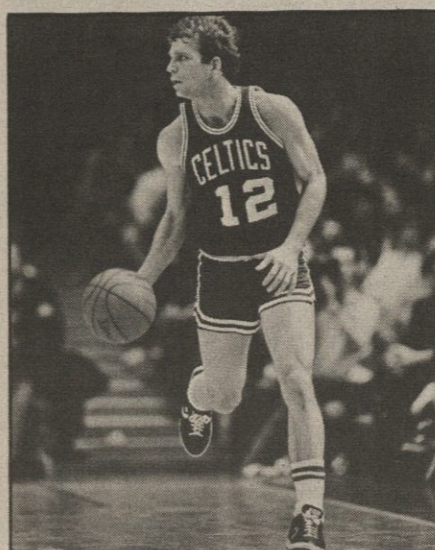
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Celtics Confidential

Camp Appearances. With the arrival of the off-season, several Celtics made camp appearances in the greater Boston area, in New England, and even in California. **Greg Kite**, **Rick Carlisle**, **Sam Vincent** and **David Thirdkill** went to the Celtics Rookie Camp in early August. Kite and Carlisle also were attendees at the Dave Cowens Basketball School in Waltham and both players intended to play in the Los Angeles Summer League. Also at the Cowens' camp were collegiates **Tom Sheehy** (University of Virginia), **Mark Plansky** (Villanova), and **Donald Powell** (Bradley). In addition to the training for youngsters, Cowens personally teaches what he calls a "Big Man's Camp." Dave actually participates in scrimmages with players to sharpen what potential professional skills players like Sheehy et. al might have.

Dave Cowens is currently interested in bringing to New England an authentic sports museum and he is not much interested in playing anymore. Yet, according to one observer of these games, Cowens easily dominated the opposition. Likely, this is what occurred the



Jerry was with K.C.

summer of 1982, when David recovered his zeal for competition after he had retired two years before. In 1982, **Randy Breuer** and **Alton Lister** (since traded) were at the Cowens' camp and Dave found himself thinking that these young Buck centers lacked the stamina needed for an NBA pivot. Since he was close friends with former Celtics and Bucks' Coach **Don Nelson**, Cowens

discussed his possible return to the NBA in Milwaukee.

He would play that season in Milwaukee, but physically, it turned out he couldn't endure the rigors of a major playing time role for the Bucks. Cowens had hoped to play a twin Tower role and some relief for **Bob Lanier**. It was a trying year for Cowens—he helped the team to the Eastern Conference Finals against the eventual champion Philadelphia 76ers, but then was forced to watch the set from the bench, injured...

Other doings in summer games included a much ballyhooed teaming of **Larry Bird** and **Magic Johnson** in a game in Los Angeles in support of the United Negro College Fund. **Ralph Sampson** also played... **John Schweitz** impressed several teams in the Central Summer League and reportedly will be invited to the Pistons' camp. Schweitz nearly made the Celtics in two consecutive Pre-Season Camps in 1982 and 1983... **Danny Ainge**, who is home after conducting basketball clinics in Switzerland, recently received an invitation to play in the Toronto Blue Jays Old-Timer's game... **Ernie DiGregorio**, former Celtic guard, former Rookie of the Year in the NBA (1974) and New England hero at Providence College, is trying to return to the NBA as a referee... **Robert Parish** conducted his annual summer camp at New England College in late July. **M.L. Carr** was a guest speaker at the camp... **Jerry Sichting** made an appearance at K.C. Jones's camp in Vermont.

Larry Bird was featured in The Boston Globe Sunday Business section in a story discussing the strategies businesses use in utilizing athletes as spokesmen for their companies... **M.L. Carr** was honored as "Champion of the Year" for his work in Boston and his efforts on behalf of Multiple Sclerosis. He will be honored at a dinner at the Sheraton-Boston October 23. For Ticket information, phone (617) 267-0055 or (617) 965-0886... The Celtics and The Boston Phoenix produced a souvenir magazine commemorating the 1985-86 championship season... The Celtics Video Yearbook, also about the 16th title, recently went on sale in VHS format...

Golden State Coach **George Karl** has expressed an interest in former Celtic center, **Rick Robey**, recently released by the Phoenix Suns... Sportschannel is starting its second **Johnny Most** sound-alike contest. For information, call the cable network at (617) 933-9360...

Via Telephone. **Sam Vincent** was reached and has some comments about his play in the Celtics Rookie

Camp and other matters. "I was impressed with the performance of **Fred Roberts**," the Celtics 2nd year pro offered. "He appeared to have the skills inside which would be useful to any NBA club. I also thought **David Thirdkill** played well again."

"I would like to see David get a real thorough shot at the big guard position, rather than the small forward. I see him matching up real well against the **Michael Jordan**, or **Al Wood**-size guards. David certainly has the speed, quickness, and size for that position." Vincent pointed out that the size of the "small" forward spot has grown with the times. "Players who play the position now are the size of a **Terry Cummings**."

Vincent compared this season's rookie camp to last year's late arrival. "Last year was totally different. Remember, we were in the middle of a contract impasse, then suddenly, I spoke with my agent **Fred Slaughter** and he told me to be on a plane in an hour to go to rookie camp. This was directly after he had told me there were no way I'd be playing until veteran's camp (then) a month later. This year I was in far better shape."

Vincent is reluctant to talk about the coming season; he's more intent on letting his play be the message. But he did admit last year, with the attack of the team inside-oriented, that he did have questions about his responsibilities. "I wasn't sure if I should penetrate or shoot. Or freelance...I wasn't sure. But this season I'm planning to just come in and play hard." Vincent's training regimen through the end of August consisted of running and playing. After September 1st, that intensifies. He runs for over an hour, shoots for most of the morning, plays games at the park in East Lansing, and then lifts weights...

Several scouts were impressed with **Rick Carlisle** in the Los Angeles Summer league... Other players who joined Carlisle in the LA Summer League included **Greg Kite** and (briefly) **Sam Vincent** and **David Thirdkill**. **Jeff Lamp** also played on the Celtics dominated entry, which won the league title... **Tom Sheehy**, who played at the Dave Cowens Basketball School, refuted any criticism of Kite's play. "He's a very good player, immovable underneath," claimed the current University of Virginia Forward... **Mike Carey**, beat writer for The Boston Herald, believes the Celtics might be headed for hard times this season. "They lost their key draft choice, and they have made no moves to compensate," said Carey at the team's Summer Camp. "And I think the minutes played will seriously add up on some of the veterans. Especially **Larry Bird**."



Eddie Gillooly

Back to Back to the Future

Unless K.C. Jones spotted a seven foot Spaniard during his recent visit to Madrid where he conducted a series of clinics, the Celtics will have the same cast in their bid for back-to-back championships. It's not likely any of the draft picks will crack the 12-man squad.

Certainly the Celtics will be searching to improve the depth and quality of the bench before the training camp gets underway but the possibilities of coming up with another **Bill Walton** or **Jerry Sichting** are mighty slim.

Since the top seven players are virtually untouchable because no one likes to tinker with a team's chemistry that has proven successful, the Celtics have little to offer to pull off a substantial trade. With the salary cap at the limit, the prospects of signing a free agent are nil.

Old friend **Rick Robey** is available and K.C. Jones for one wouldn't mind having the 6-11 former Kentucky star on the bench but that move wouldn't really be significant since Rick would see limited duty playing behind **Robert Parish** and **Bill Walton**. Rick needs a lot of playing time to be effective.

Rick is a quality person and would be an asset but the Celtics real need is a quick forward who could spell **Larry Bird** for 10 to 12 strong minutes a game. Most often, the Celts offense sputters when Larry is sitting.

Thus far, **Scott Wedman** has been more effective when he's on the court with Bird than when he's filling in for the Celtics super star. With the opposition doubling Bird, Wedman's able to find more space for his jumpers.

Wedman was most proficient when he subbed for the ailing **Kevin McHale** last season but it seems he doesn't get the open jumpers when he slips into Bird's slot. It could be that Jones will have to devise some



Wedman will fit somewhere.

new plays for Wedman to insure he gets the ball in the right spots when Bird's resting on the bench.

Scotty is a smart defender and rebounder and his role could be even more vital this season than it has in the past few years. Larry shouldn't be asked to continue at the 40 minutes-plus pace. Wedman's jumper could have a relaxing effect on the Celtics, especially Bird.

Even though the Celtics will be another year older with no new faces, they'll still enter the 1986-87 season as the odds on favorite to win another Eastern Conference title. The odds will narrow considerably on their chances to repeat since that feat hasn't been accomplished in 18 seasons.

With a change of key players in Philadelphia and Washington, the 76ers and Bullets remain question marks. The Milwaukee Bucks, with the acquisition of **Jack Sikma**, will be much stronger. **Chuck Daly** still needs a little more help before the Pistons can be projected as a bona fide contender.

Injuries decimated the Knicks last season and there's no guarantee any of the injured players will return to form. Still, the Knicks have to be rated as a division contender if **Patrick Ewing** can stay healthy throughout the season.

Chicago proved an exciting team once **Michael Jordan** returned to the lineup but the Bulls are not disciplined and will be learning a new system under a new coach. They might need a year to get their act together.

If the Atlanta brain trusts ever figure out what they really have in **Dominique Wilkins**, the Hawks could be one of the toughest clubs in the NBA this season. With center **Kevin Willis** improving with each outing, the Hawks surfaced as a formidable unit. If the Hawks take more advantage of Wilkins in a fast break style, they could be devastating.

No. 1 pick **Brad Daugherty** is not ready to carry the Cleveland Cavs on his broad shoulders but he should improve the club's inside game, despite the loss of rebounding forward **Roy Hinson** to the Sixers.

Indiana is young and could blossom at any time but it's doubtful the Pacers will make any real impact

this season. They have height and bulk but no real speed.

At this point, it's difficult to analyze the impact **Moses Malone** will have with the Bullets or what his loss will mean to the Sixers. Any **Moses Malone** team has to be rated highly regardless of the supporting cast. One thing is certain, **Moses** won't be surrounded by the quality of talent he had in Philly but the new surroundings should increase his motivation.

Jeff Ruland is no slouch and if he can stay healthy, he'll become a favorite in the Spectrum. Jeff is capable of 10 to 12 rebounds a game which should benefit the Sixers. He'll be flanked by two strong boardmen in **Charles Barkley** and **Roy Hinson**.

Even with the loss of **Malone**, the Sixers appear more balanced at this time than the Bullets. **Moses** is a better postup player than **Ruland** which means the Sixers offense will be more flexible.

The Celtics will have their hands full in the East Conference but if they can avoid a rash of injuries, they'll finish on top. This will be their third try for back to back championships and that should be all the motivation they need.



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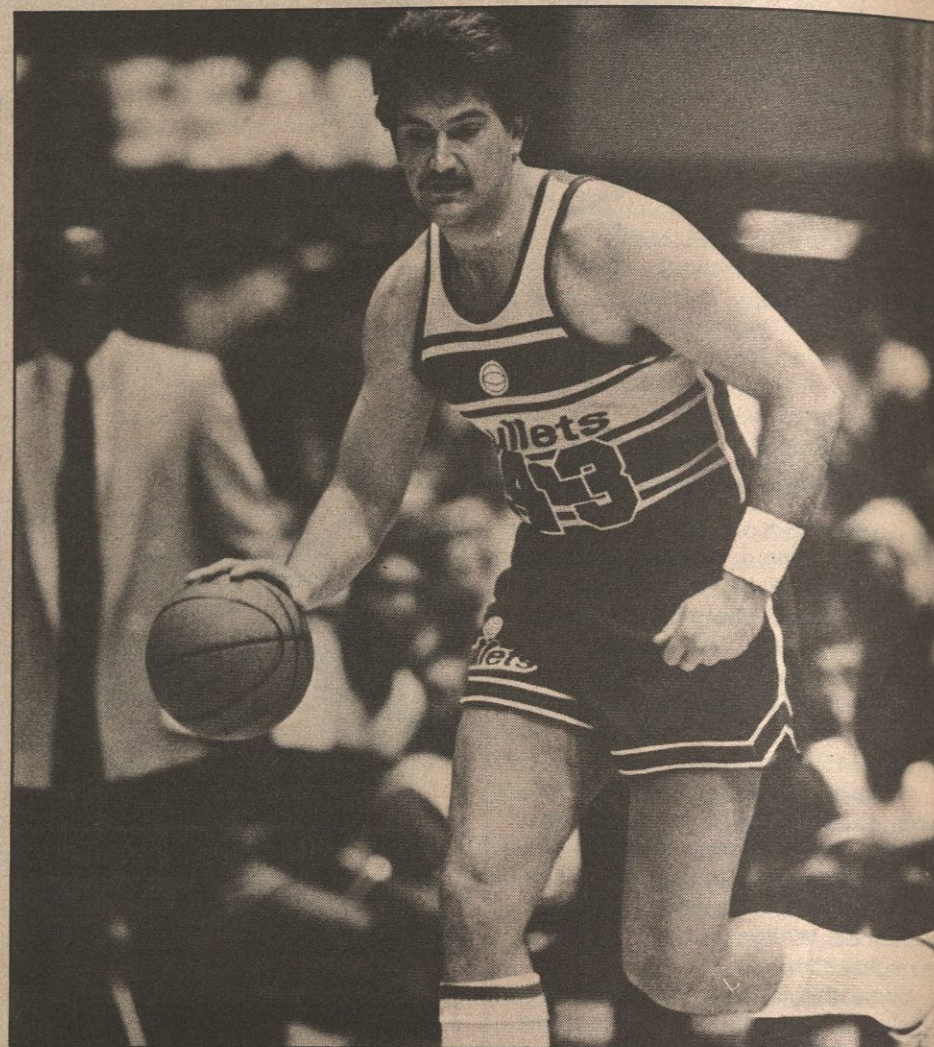
Glenn Ordway

Who Said It's Impossible?

Who said that it was impossible to make major trades in this age of the salary cap? Philadelphia, Washington, Seattle, Milwaukee, Detroit and Utah ignored that logic and pulled off blockbusters that should give them all a completely different look. After a couple seasons of very little mobility around the NBA, the fan is suddenly faced with the task of once again buying a program. From a Boston standpoint, the toughest chore for the fan maybe learning how to hate Philadelphia all over again. Moses now resides in our nations capital. Somehow that just doesn't seem right. Jeff Ruland will be the guy the Sixers will bank on in the middle. My partner, Johnny Most has a real dilemma...He recently developed both a respect and fondness for Ruland. But can he live with Ruland in Philly? Remember this is a guy who despises Philadelphia so much, he won't eat cream cheese. If only cigarettes were made in Philly. The bigger question for the Sixers will be Ruland's health. He has missed half of the last two seasons with various ailments. The most serious being his shoulder. In that respect, the 76ers maybe taking the biggest gamble of all since they don't have any worthwhile backup at the center position having dealt off Terry Catledge to the Bullets as well. It is so hard to evaluate the impact on both clubs of such a huge swap. As the Celtics have learned over the years...You can have the greatest individual talent in the world. But you only win when that individual talent bonds together into a team. There is one peculiar aspect that baffles me. The Sixers claimed that they were going into the draft specifically to gain some size citing the new success formula in the league of playing two big guys at once. Instead, they came out of draft day a smaller team. Of course they still have the problem of not knowing whether Andrew Toney is healthy or not. Julius Erving is a year older and Bobby Jones is gone. Oh well, Celtics fans still have Charles Barkley to kick around. He'll

work up front with Roy Hinson, Cliff Robinson and Ruland. And Moses Malone is still fuming at Philadelphia management to the point where he's boldly predicted that the Sixers will never beat the Bullets this season.

Washington is following the lead of Boston and Houston and plans on playing Malone and Manute Bol together. This should be interesting in that Bol is no threat at the offensive end. Matter of fact the Celtics last year had Larry Bird just roam on Bol and Parish ended up guarding the scoring forward. With the new Washington twin tower lineup, you may see more teams put a weaker defensive forward on Bol and do a lot more double team concentration on Moses. We'll all get a better idea on the makeup of this team when we see them three times during the pre-season. Since Bob Lanier hung up his size 21 sneakers, the Milwaukee Bucks have operated without a stand-out big guy in the middle. Let's face it...they have fared pretty well winning the Central Division title in each one of those seasons. But now with the acquisition of Jack Sikma, they feel they have the ingredients to take it one step further. Ironically for the Celtics, Robert Parish has probably fared better over the years against Sikma than against the other half of that trade Alton Lister. How will the Bucks react to a new wrinkle that will have their center now heavily involved in the offense? And speaking of offense, Adrian Dantley will bring his arsenal to Detroit having been dealt off for Kelley Tripucka and Kent Benson. The Pistons still possess the problem of having a center that likes to play offensively 18 feet from the basket and not having a true power forward. And Frank Layden may drop a few pounds attempting to get Tripucka to play some "D". With draft improvements for Cleveland, Phoenix and Golden State and who knows maybe a healthy New York Knicks contingent, the first half of the season looks quite interesting and certainly different. Now if we can only find a few ways to hate Philadelphia again?



Ruland will team with Barkley.

Red Plays Red

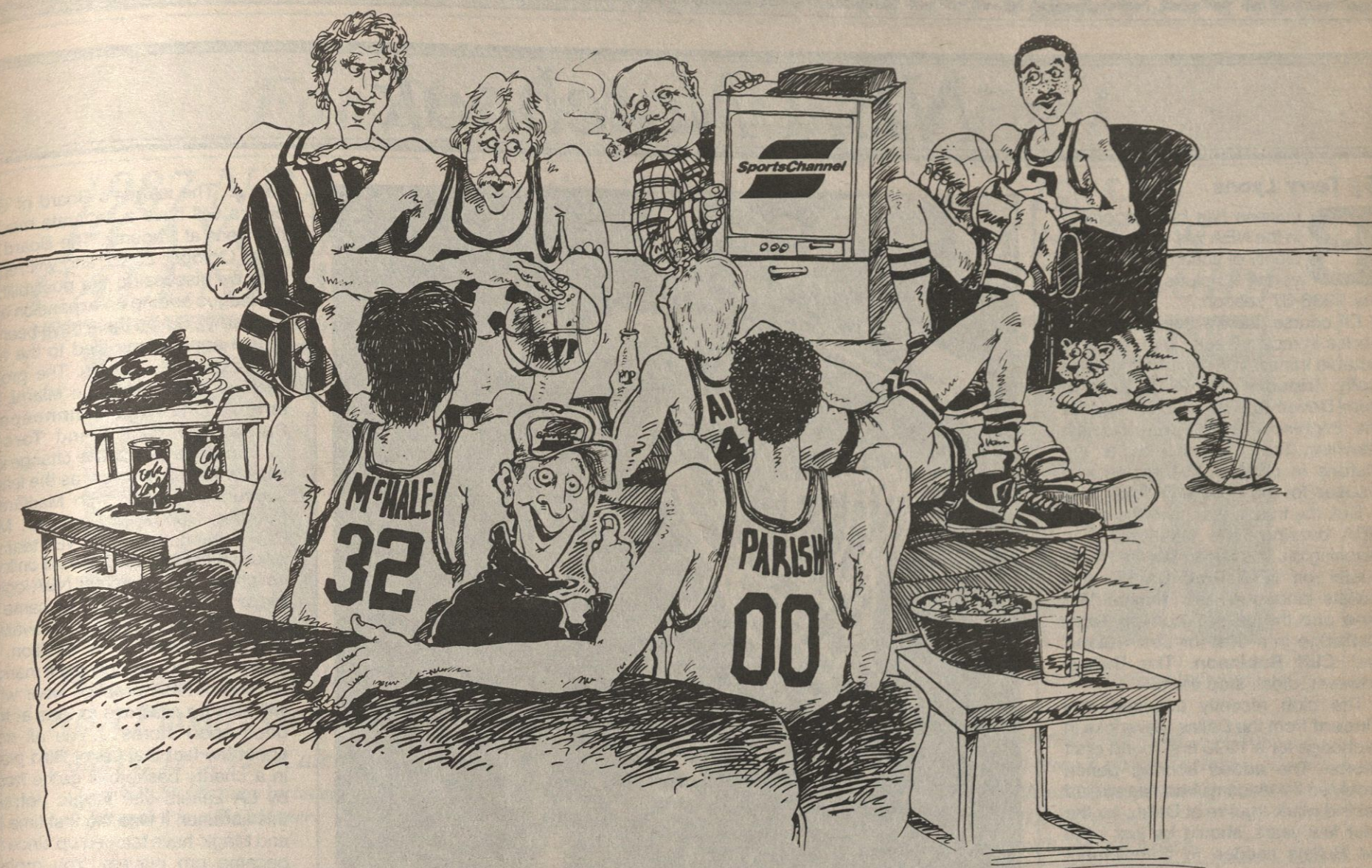
In a brilliant piece of type-casting, Red Auerbach will play Red Auerbach in a forthcoming film titled "Amazing Grace and Chuck." The movie stars Alex English with Jamie Lee Curtis as his agent, Gregory Peck as the President, and Red as Red.

The movie is about Alex's special relationship with a little boy who quits Little League as a matter of conscience. English plays a member of the Celtics and will actually play for the Green in an October tenth exhibition game at the Garden.

One scene calls for Alex to explain to Red that he must quit the team. Later, Red was asked by a member of the film company, what he would really do if his star player came to him and told him he had to leave because of personal principles. The man must have been from L.A. since Red had to explain to him that such a thing had actually happened to him...remember Dave Cowens.



This guy could be a star!



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M.L. Carr

Time to Get Down to Business

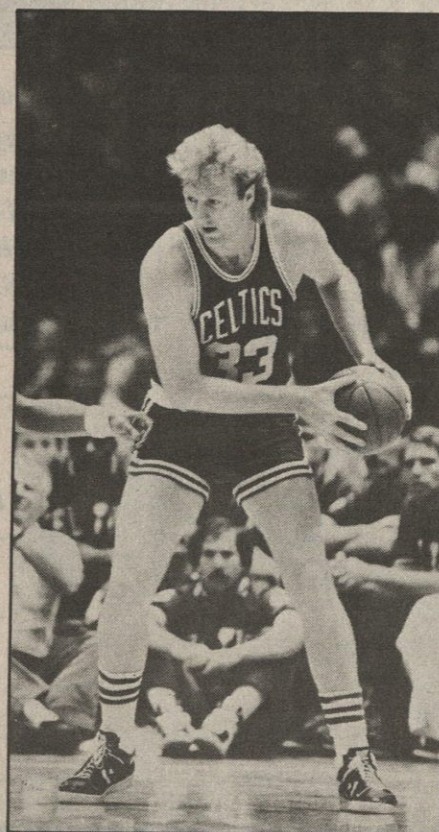
Obviously, it's great that the Celtics won the championship this past season, the 16th in the franchise's history. But pretty soon, it will be time to forget the celebrating and get down to the business of getting ready for another season. That's rookie camp, then training camp begins.

The Celtics will be trying to be the first team in the NBA to win back-to-back championships in almost 20 years. The Celtics were the last team to do it, back in 1967-68 and 1968-69. No one's been able to do it since. What's ironic about that is the Celtics didn't even make the playoffs after winning that second title.

It will be even more difficult for the Celtics to win the championship the second time around. Why? Because each one of the 22 teams in the league will be gunning for the Celtics every time they play them. For most teams, beating the Celtics makes their season, but that will be even more the case during the upcoming season. No one wants to see the championship repeat and everyone wants to have the bragging rights and say they knocked off the Celtics.

I think the Celtics will be a strong team once again in 1986-87. Any team that has Larry Bird, the best player in the game today, is going to be tough. And you know Bird is the kind of guy who never gets tired of winning, so he's not going to be bored, just because he has a couple of championship rings. He wants more.

The rest of the players on the team are just as competitive, as are the coaching staff and front office personnel. K.C. Jones, Chris Ford and Jimmy Rodgers will make sure the team doesn't get to comfortable and rest on its laurels. The Celtics will have virtually the same cast as a year ago--barring trades. That's usually bad news for most teams, but not this



Bird is still the key.

one. How could one complain about having Robert Parish, Dennis Johnson, Danny Ainge, Kevin McHale and Bill Walton coming back?

The great thing about these players is they're all entering the primes of their careers. Johnson and Ainge really work well together in the backcourt, and now that Ainge is becoming more and more confident each season, I expect him to assert himself a lot this season. Of course, that's not to say he didn't last year. Danny is one of the most valuable players the Celtics have.

Johnson will continue to be the hard-nose defensive player who isn't afraid to take shots late in the game.

Robert had a really good season at center. There were times when he was playing as well as anyone else in the league from his position. With

Walton and McHale around, Parish didn't have to play as much as he did in the past. That made him fresh and well-rested when the playoffs began.

Let me talk about Walton for a moment. He proved that when healthy, he is still a great player. The Celtics gambled when they traded for Walton, but the deal is certainly paying off huge dividends. Not only was Walton a key contributor at forward or center but he brought plenty of leadership and enthusiasm to the club. It's great to see a guy who's been around as long as Walton still loves the game. You can't help but be happy for Bill, considering all the injuries he's had in the past.

Bird has said the key to whether the Celtics repeat for the championship is how much they get from Walton. He could very well be right.

Speaking of frontcourt personnel, I think Greg Kite did a really good job whenever K.C. Jones called on him.

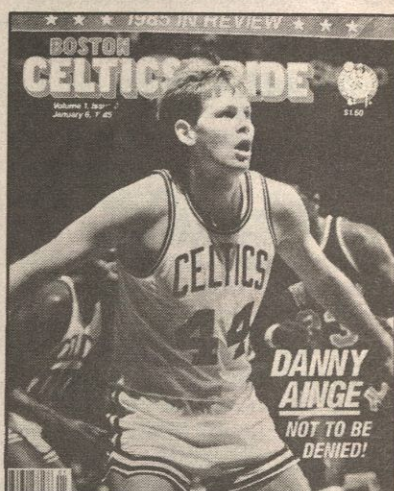
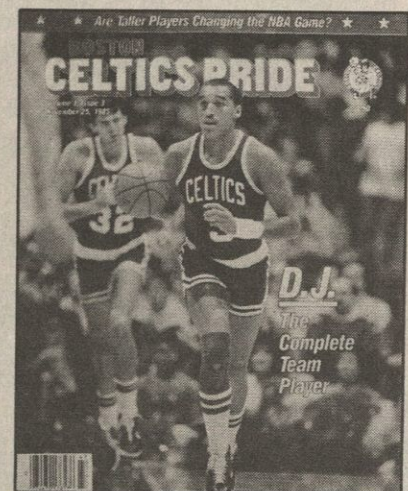
Nobody asked Kite to score a whole lot of points, all he had to do was hit the boards and play defense for a few minutes at a time. What I like about Greg is he understands his role on the team and does his best to fulfill it. Sure everyone wants to be a regular and see a lot of playing time, but you'll never hear Kite complaining about his role on the team.

Another youngster who had a good year was Rick Carlisle. This kid is a good shooter and could get more playing time in the future.

Jerry Sichting got off to a slow start after he came to Boston from the Indiana Pacers, but he eventually fit into the Celtics system quite well. Sichting gave the Celtics exactly what they needed -- a guy who could come off the bench and hit the outside shot on a consistent basis. He was a big part of the Celtics success last season.

Don't forget David Thirdkill and Sam Vincent. They might be ready for more prominent roles this year.

So the Celtics will have virtually the same team as a year ago, like I said, But since they won the championship with this bunch, that's not bad news at all.



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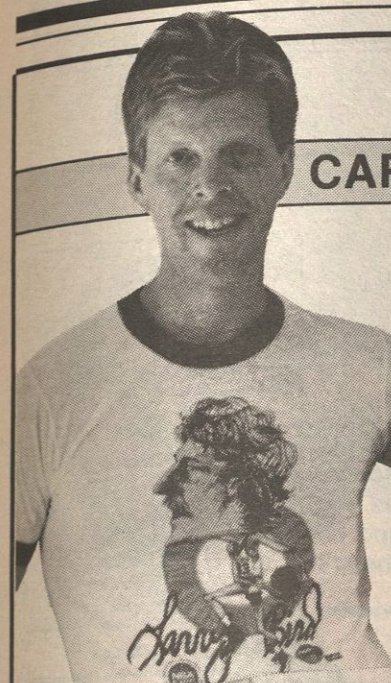
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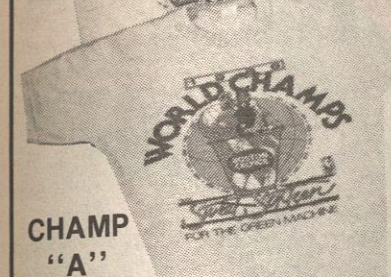
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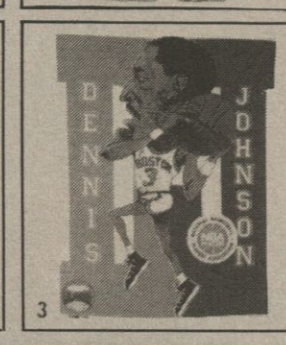
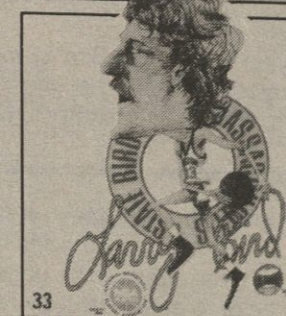
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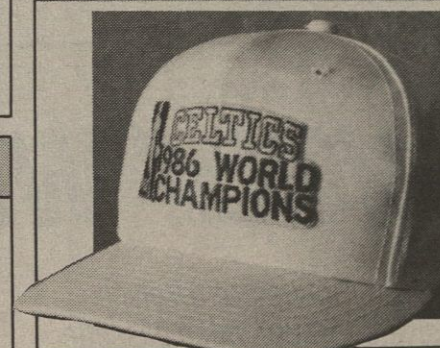
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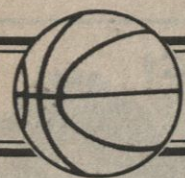
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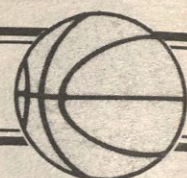
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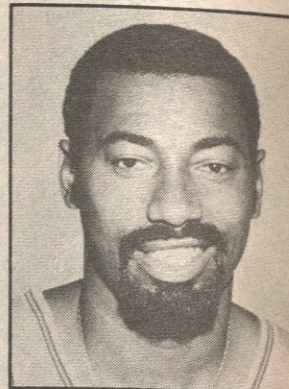
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Magic Johnson

Magic Johnson comments on playing with Larry Bird in the Negro College charity basketball game in Los Angeles: "It was a delight...a fantasy which I fulfilled. Now I can go on and do other things in basketball, although I hope to play with him again."

Wilt Chamberlain rates Robert Parish as an NBA Center: "I think he is overlooked, but he fits into the Celtics' system extremely well. He does the job that needs to be done. You ask different things of different centers, so you have to see what they're asked to do. Parish has a great transition game and he plays decent defense. He is a good offensive basketball player and he rebounds well. He does what's needed for Boston, and that's why they're world champions."



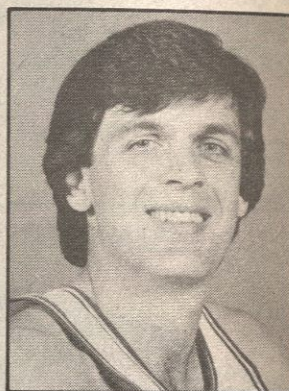
Wilt Chamberlain



Larry Bird

Larry Bird on drug testing: "I endorse it. I think anybody applying for a job anywhere should go through a drug test."

Kevin McHale talks about the fact that the Celtics will not have to play in New York on Christmas Day this season: "That should make it a better holiday. K.C. won't be mad at me, my wife won't be mad at me, my kids won't be mad at me. Plus, I won't have to give Red any cash Christmas presents (McHale missed the team plane last Christmas Eve when the team played its afternoon game in New York and was fined)."



Kevin McHale

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Celtics Classics

1971-72

Dave Cowens' Sophomore Season

The Celtics had seen themselves go full circle by the time the 1971-72 season rolled around.

After winning successive NBA titles in 1967-68 and the following season, the Celtics slid to a 34-48 mark and didn't even make the playoffs. But the following year, Dave Cowens joined the team as a rookie out of Florida State, and the rebuilding process was under way.

Coach Tommy Heinsohn liked the prospect of a good year prior to the start of '71-72. He had a top-flight center in Cowens, a high scoring, quick guard in Jo Jo White, a dependable veteran named John Havlicek, who excelled at either forward or guard to go along with the likes of Tom Sanders, Don Chaney, Don Nelson and Steve Kuberski.

The Celtics of this year were good, not great. That fact wasn't lost on Heinsohn.

"You are good because you are quick," he once told the team. "You are great when you are quick and aggressive. You're not the kind of team that can win on an off night the way the Bucks, Knicks and Lakers can. Anything you accomplish will be the result of hard work and hustle."

Since this was a Boston team, Heinsohn didn't have to worry about every player busting his gut every night--that was a given on this squad. And the end result was a 56-26 regular season record.

Those victories were the most racked up by the Celtics in five years. Boston won the Atlantic Division title, marking the first time in seven years it had finished in first place. It was the first time in two years the Celtics had beaten every team in the league.

The Celtics were the second-toughest team on their home floor, piling up a 32-9 record at Boston Garden.

The key to this fine season? It was the redhead-Cowens. There was no sophomore jinx present with this guy. In fact, he was even better in his second year than he was as a rookie, making it quite clear he was one of the most potent players in the NBA.

What made Cowens so great was his versatility. He could battle and bang under the boards with the big guys, but could run the floor and shoot from the outside with the guards and forwards. No other pivot in the NBA could do that.



Dave Cowens: Non-stop hustle.

Then there was Cowens' non-stop hustle. Go to the floor to pick up a loose ball? Get steamrolled to pick up an offensive foul? No sweat. It was all part of the job to Cowens.

And Cowens played that way from the moment he entered the game until the final whistle sounded. He never, ever let up. "It's not just the fans who ooh and ahh when he's doing his thing," Sanders said. "The other players can't help but react to somebody jumping, kicking, elbowing way up there. Those gentlemen on the bench sit and say, 'Ooh, look at that.'"

The league's co-Rookie of the Year (with Portland's Geoff Petrie) the previous season) Cowens was adding guile to his game without sacrificing his ferociousness.

"He's getting smarter all the time," Heinsohn said. "He's seeing options better on plays. Last year it was make the move or do nothing. Now he knows what's going on. By next year he's going to be some kind of player."

Said Knick guard Walt Frazier after a stunning show by Cowens: "Now I know why Boston is winning."



Heinsohn didn't have to worry.

The regular season over and the Atlantic Division title in hand, the Celtics' next goal was to keep winning through the playoffs.

Boston's first test was the Atlanta Hawks, who found their way into the postseason foray despite a lackluster 36-46 regular season record. And since the Celtics had disposed of the Hawks in the previous four meetings it appeared this series would be quick and painless.

Not quite Boston romped over Atlanta, 126-108, in the opener at the Garden, but the Hawks came right back to even the series with a 113-104 triumph in game two.

The Celtics whopped Atlanta, 136-113 at Boston in the third game, but Pete Maravich's 36 points enabled the Hawks to shoot down Boston in game four, 112-110 to even the series again.

Finally, the Celtics gained control, winning the next two contests to eliminate the Hawks in six games.

Next in line for the Celtics were the rival Knicks, who despite the loss of Willis Reed to injuries, were playing strongly. The Knicks had been revitalized by a midseason trade which brought guard Earl "The Pearl" Monroe to New York from the Baltimore Bullets.

Teaming with crafty veterans like Walt Frazier, Dave DeBusschere, Bill Bradley, Dick Barnett and Jerry Lucas, Reed's replacement at center, New York had a well-balanced team which almost never made a mistake.

And the Knicks didn't err to often against the Celtics. They took the Celtics homecourt advantage away with an easy 116-94 victory in the opening game at the Garden...

The New Yorkers captured the second game, but Boston bounced back to make the series 2-1 with a 115-109 triumph in game three. It appeared the Celtics were back in the race, but the Knicks crushed Boston in game four, after the Celtics fell, 14-0, in the fifth game, they eventually lost that, 111-103. End of series, End of Season.

"I never saw a more depressing locker room than after the Knicks won that final game at Boston," Heinsohn said. "Our players were inconsolable. They had expected so much of themselves and then nothing. I should have been disappointed, but I wasn't. I wasn't because I saw the team growing." And the rest of the NBA did, too.

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